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## **HUMANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY**

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HUMANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY

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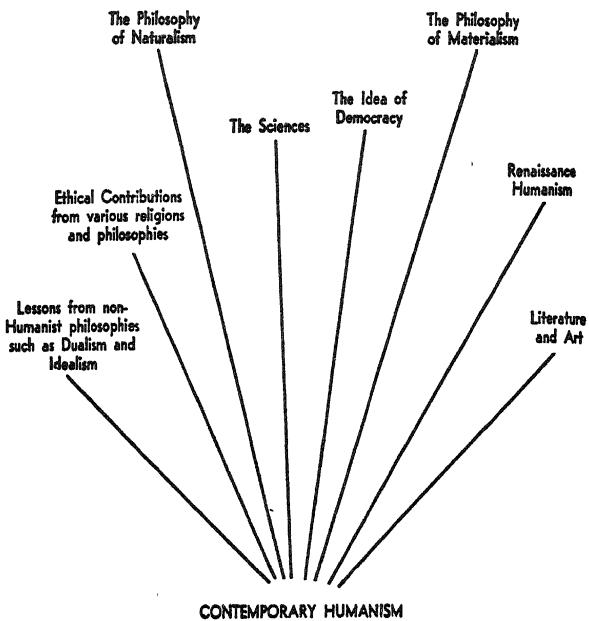
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## BACKGROUND AND AFFILIATIONS OF THE HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY





# Humanism As A Philosophy

By

CORLISS LAMONT



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TO MY MOTHER

*Discerning companion  
in philosophy*



## HUMANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY

### FOREWORD

This book is a philosopher's testament. In it I have tried to describe in clear and simple terms that fully rounded philosophy of life that I call *Humanism*. I have given my own version of the much-debated concept of Humanism, and both expect and welcome disagreement with my interpretation of a viewpoint that in its fundamentals goes back at least as far as Athens of the fifth century B. C. and the great Age of Pericles.

In my treatment I have aimed at conciseness and have written what is essentially an introduction to the Humanist philosophy. Accordingly, I have discussed very briefly or have omitted entirely the details of many philosophic problems that in a longer work would certainly merit extended consideration. For example, though I am well aware of the profound influence of social and economic factors upon philosophy, I have had space to sketch in but little of that background.

This volume constitutes an expansion and revision of a lecture course entitled "The Philosophy of Naturalistic Humanism" given by me at Columbia University, 1946-1949. I am grateful to the editors of *The Humanist*, *The Journal of Philosophy* and *The Journal of Religion*

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for permission to reprint here certain material that first appeared in those publications. In Chapter III, I have drawn on an earlier book of mine, *The Illusion of Immortality*.

As for the individuals and friends who over many years have helped me to formulate the general position set forth in *Humanism as a Philosophy*, their name is legion and I am not even going to try to thank them all specifically here. In the writing of this book, as in most other aspects of my life, my indebtedness to others approaches infinity.

C. L.

New York City

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## CHAPTER I      THE MEANING OF HUMANISM

### 1. *The Importance of Philosophy*

Since the earliest days of philosophic reflection far back in ancient times in both East and West thinkers of depth and acumen, whose number has greatly increased in the modern era, have advanced the simple proposition that the chief end of human life is to work for the happiness of man upon this earth and within the confines of the Nature that is his home. This philosophy of enjoying, developing and making available to everyone the abundant possibilities of this natural world is profound in its implications, yet easy to understand and congenial to common sense. This man-centered theory of life has remained relatively unheeded during long periods of history. While it has gone under a variety of names, it is the philosophy that I believe is most accurately designated as *Humanism*.

Humanism as a philosophy has ever competed with other philosophic viewpoints for the allegiance of men. But however far-reaching its disagreements with rival philosophies of the past and present, Humanism at least agrees with them on the importance of philosophy as such. That importance stems from the perennial need of human

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beings to find significance in their lives, to integrate their personalities around some clear, consistent, and compelling view of existence, and to seek a definite and reliable method in the solution of their problems. Philosophy brings clarity and meaning into the careers of individuals, nations and civilizations.

Actually, as Aristotle once remarked, everyone follows out a philosophy whether he is aware of it or not. Every adult conducts his life according to some general pattern of behavior that is more or less conscious, more or less consistent, more or less adequate to cope with the everyday affairs and the inevitable crises of the human scene. This guiding pattern in the life of every person is his philosophy, even though it be implicit in his actions rather than explicit in his mind; "his inarticulate major premise," as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes put it. As a matter of fact, such is the strength of tradition that men have always tended to accept the particular philosophy or religion prevailing in the group into which they were born. In any case, human beings, primitive or civilized, educated or uneducated, plodding or brilliant, simply cannot escape from philosophy.

As a developed study and discipline philosophy has for its purpose the analysis and clarification of human actions and aims, problems and ideals. It brings into the light of intelligence the half-conscious, half-expressed gropings of men and of peoples. It teaches us to say what we mean and to mean what we say. It is the tenacious attempt of reasoning men to think through the most fundamental issues of life, to reach reasonable conclusions on

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first and last things, to suggest worth-while goals that can command the loyalty of individuals and groups. Philosophy as criticism boldly analyzes and brings before the supreme court of the mind dominant human values, ideas and institutions. Though it often succeeds in reconciling apparently conflicting viewpoints, "the mission of philosophy," as Professor Morris Cohen has said, "is to bring a sword as well as peace." This means that philosophers have the obligation of opening up the closed questions of the past, of exposing fanaticism and folly, of raising provocative issues where none were seen before.

Philosophy as synthesis attempts to work out a correct and integrated view of the universe, of human nature, and of society. This is an immense and unique task. It was Plato's ambitious claim that "the philosopher is the spectator of all Time and all Existence." This statement is true, though I hasten to add that the philosopher cannot afford to be merely a spectator. Plato's observation makes plain that the philosophic enterprise covers, in its own particular way, practically the whole gamut of human thought and activity. In order to attain a reasoned interpretation of Nature and man, the philosopher must inquire into the major branches of the natural sciences, such as chemistry, astronomy and biology, and likewise of the social sciences, such as history, economics and politics. Moreover, he must study carefully the realms of religion and art and literature; and cast a discerning eye over the day-to-day preoccupations and common-sense attitudes of the average person.

From all these different though inter-related fields

the philosopher draws the relevant facts and principles, with their implications, that go into the construction of his broad philosophic generalizations and synthesis. He constantly weaves back and forth between fact and theory, scientific law and far-flung cosmic speculation, always trying to be objective in his conclusions and faithful to the method of reason. The philosopher, to take over a thought from Matthew Arnold, is he who makes the determined and continued effort to see life clearly and see it whole. Or, in the words of Professor F. C. S. Schiller of Oxford, he is the man who learns "how to fit together into a significant picture the bits of a great world jig-saw puzzle."

The history of thought records many different philosophic systems that have had in their day a great appeal to the minds of men. We can see now that some of these systems were primarily artistic creations on the part of thinkers who let themselves be carried away by their imaginations or who obviously over-emphasized some limited aspect of existence. System-building philosophers only too often have mistaken their daring and original inspirations for a reliable representation of reality, or have sought to reconcile the irreconcilable, or have treated their particular philosophies, grounded in a certain age and culture, as the complete and final word on the nature of things.

For these reasons there has been some justifiable reaction against philosophic "systems." And contemporary philosophers have tended to confine themselves to certain circumscribed problems and areas rather than striking out boldly toward a comprehensive world-view or *Weltan-*

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*schauung*. Yet they cannot really escape from the responsibility of endeavoring to provide a systematic answer concerning the main issues in philosophy, however unfinished and tentative their conclusions may be.

Though the vast extent of human knowledge in this twentieth century renders present philosophical pursuits a good deal more complicated than in the time of Plato and Aristotle, nonetheless the very growth of knowledge in the modern era gives us a considerable advantage. Likewise current-day philosophers are able to acquire valuable background and perspective from an analysis of the strength and weaknesses of numerous past philosophies. In the Occident the philosophic tradition goes back some 2500 years to the ancient Greeks; in the Orient it is of about equal length if we take the teachings of Confucius in China and Buddha in India as our starting points. During these twenty-five centuries a vital core of philosophic wisdom has been gradually accumulating.

Despite constant talk that philosophy as a separate field of investigation has become outmoded and unnecessary, I cannot imagine a time when it will cease to play a significant role in human affairs. True enough, certain branches of knowledge once within the province of philosophy, such as psychology, government and sociology, have developed into sciences on their own account. But philosophy blazed the way for these disciplines. And whatever sub-fields break away from it in the future, philosophy will always retain the important function of providing a critique of fundamental concepts and values and of offering to men an intellectually valid, over-all view of

life and death, the individual and society, mind and matter, the universe and destiny.

That very compartmentalizing of knowledge that has so stimulated the progress of modern science makes philosophy perhaps more essential now than ever before. Some of America's leading colleges have lately been introducing integration courses in order to offset curricular sub-division and to give students a more unified picture of human life and history. A similar unification is required throughout the whole cultural field. Philosophers are our experts in integration; they form a general staff for the collective culture of mankind. They are liaison officers among the many different branches of knowledge; between the civilizations of the past and the present; between the great, living systems of belief that move the various nations of our day. Philosophers are always reminding people of the inter-relatedness of things, always bringing together what has been artificially torn apart and disunited. It is the professional duty of the philosopher to develop an acute and abiding sense of the whole, though he must take care not to attest to unities that do not exist.

It is obvious from what I have said about the functions of philosophy that it is very much concerned with fundamental moral, social and political issues. The great tradition in philosophy, stemming from Plato and his most notable book, *The Republic*, has always paid marked attention to the definition of the good and the road to its attainment by individuals and groups. The problem of the good has become increasingly complex in modern times, with a resulting obligation on the part of philoso-

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phers to think of the good society in terms of populous nations and indeed the entire world.

A number of the traditional philosophic positions concerning the nature of the universe and of man constitute in their very essence disguised apologies for or ideological escapes from existing conditions. Thus the discerning intellect will discover that certain abstruse philosophic issues, which at first glance may seem far removed from everyday life, have deep and definite roots in economic and social tensions. Philosophy is not above the battle, but directly or indirectly is affected by and reacts upon the fortunes of manifold individuals and social groups engaged in earning a living, reproducing the species, establishing governments, fighting wars, making peace and pursuing happiness.

There can be no doubt that if a philosophy of life is to fulfil its proper role, it must be a philosophy of living, a philosophy to live by, a philosophy of action. Philosophy at its best is not simply an interpretation or explanation of things. It is also a dynamic enterprise that aims to change the world in the direction of those ends and values that it sets up as supremely worth-while and desirable; to bring mankind closer to those standards of truth and methods of truth-seeking that it establishes as most reliable. All this implies the working out of effective methods for the application of tried and tested philosophic wisdom. Hence philosophy has the task, not only of attaining the truth, but also of showing how that truth can become operative in the affairs of men, of helping to bridge the age-long gap between thinkers and doers, between theory and prac-

tice. Philosophy might well recommend as a universal motto Henri Bergson's striking epigram: "*Act* as men of thought; *think* as men of action."

Philosophy's constant involvement in the issues that mean most to men and in the defense of truth is dramatically brought out in the career of Socrates. Just as in the Western tradition the great martyr-death in religion was that of Jesus, so in philosophy it was that of Socrates. And just as the New Testament tells in simple and beautiful language the unforgettable story of Jesus, so the *Dialogues* of Plato permanently enshrine the memory of Socrates. The powers-that-were in ancient Athens accused Socrates of corrupting the minds of youth by raising too many thought-provoking questions and giving those questions an unorthodox answer. Rather than stay silent or compromise, Socrates defied the authorities and drank the hemlock. "The unexamined life is not worth living," said Socrates in his final remarks to the judges, as recounted in the *Apology*. "I would rather die," he continued, "having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. . . . The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness. . . . No evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."<sup>1</sup>

Then and there, in the year 399 B.C., Socrates once and for all established a moral imperative for philosophers: that no matter what the personal consequences, it is necessary for them to stand firm for what they consider the truth and the right. In addition to Socrates, there have been other outstanding heroes in the philosophic pantheon, such as Giordano Bruno, the Italian Pantheist,



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whom the Catholic Inquisition burned at the stake in 1600 after he refused to recant; and Benedict Spinoza, a Dutch Jew of the seventeenth century, ostracized and excommunicated at an early age by the Amsterdam Synagogue and hounded throughout life because of his opinions.

But since philosophers are, after all, only human and are subject to most of the same pressures as other men, they do not always demonstrate intellectual and moral courage of the highest order. It is not surprising that some of those who make philosophy their profession should be intellectually timorous, out of touch with the everyday world, and fearful of becoming embroiled in those deep-reaching disputes that are the heart of the philosophic quest. One familiar way of evading fundamental issues is to throw around them an intricate net of unintelligible verbiage; to redefine ordinary words in such an extraordinary manner that utter confusion is the result. Another favorite method is to assume an attitude of noble impartiality toward those recurring controversies that mean most to the common man; or to turn aside every question of consequence by asking another question in return. Yet it is precisely the business of philosophers to do their best to give honest answers to honest inquiries.

One of the chief troubles with philosophy has been that most of the works on the subject have been written by professional philosophers *for* professional philosophers or have been addressed to an intellectual elite. Now though there are of course technical problems in philosophy, as in other spheres of knowledge, that only spe-

cialists can understand and fruitfully pursue, there is no reason under the sun why the basic ideas in this field should not be presented in a simple, concise and understandable fashion that can be grasped by the average literate person. Philosophy has always been both in need and susceptible of such humanization. Again, Socrates, by making philosophy an absorbing and exciting thing to the young men of Athens, set an excellent example that philosophers have rarely taken seriously enough.

Socrates lived and taught in Greece during a time of far-reaching social turmoil and disintegration. This leads me to say that important as philosophy always is, it assumes even greater significance during periods of crisis. If philosophy is worth anything, it should be able to bring to men and nations some measure of poise, steadfastness and wisdom in exactly such a tumultuous epoch of world history as this first half of the twentieth century. A people without a clear and recognized philosophy is likely to falter in a serious crisis because it is confused about the central issues or has no supreme loyalty for which it is willing to make supreme sacrifices.

America and all mankind continue to live through critical days. Philosophy should have much to say on why the human race, despite all its much-vaunted progress, has fought two devastating world wars within the space of thirty years; and at the conclusion of these holocausts faces the awful possibility of the Great Atomic War. Indubitably philosophers possess the right and duty to pass some severe moral judgments on modern man. Yet in the midst of darkness and despair philosophy can

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also serve today as a corrective to the negations of pessimism. Its broad perspectives may well lead us to regard with a good deal of scepticism the widespread prophecies about civilization collapsing and coming to an end; or to realize that if our civilization does perish, another and perhaps better one may succeed it.

The fact is that the entire world is in want of a sound and dynamic philosophy adequate to the spirit and needs of this twentieth century; a generalized view of human life and all existence that will give the peoples of every continent and country a total and integrated perspective of things; a universal goal, method and hope that will lift mortal men above their personal limitations and provincial interests to a vision of the magnificent possibilities of humanity as a whole. It is the actualization of these potentialities, on an international scale, that is the next great task ahead. In my judgment the philosophy best calculated to liberate the creative energies of mankind and to serve as a common bond between the different peoples of the earth is that way of life known as Humanism.

### 2. *The Meaning of Humanism*

Humanism has had a long and notable career, with roots reaching far back into the past and deep into the life of civilizations supreme in their day. It has had eminent representatives in all the great nations of the world. As the American historian, Professor Edward P. Cheyney, says, Humanism has meant many things: "It may be the

reasonable balance of life that the early Humanists discovered in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of the humanities or polite letters; it may be the freedom from religiosity and the vivid interest in all sides of life of a Queen Elizabeth or a Benjamin Franklin; it may be the responsiveness to all human passions of a Shakespeare or a Goethe; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the center and sanction. It is in the last sense, elusive as it is, that Humanism has had perhaps its greatest significance since the sixteenth century."<sup>2</sup>

It is with this last sense of Humanism that this book is mainly concerned. And I shall endeavor to the best of my ability to remove any elusiveness or ambiguity from this meaning of the word. Actually, Humanism as a philosophy represents a specific and forthright view of the universe, the nature of man and the treatment of human problems. The term *Humanist* first came into use in the early sixteenth century to designate the writers and scholars of the European Renaissance. Contemporary Humanism includes the most enduring values of Renaissance Humanism, but in philosophic scope and significance goes far beyond it.

To define twentieth-century Humanism in the briefest possible manner, I would say that it is a philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world and according to the methods of reason and democracy. Now while this proposition has many profound implications, I do not think it is difficult to understand. And Humanism in general is not a philosophy merely for professional philosophers, but is a way

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of thinking and doing for average men and women seeking to lead happy and useful lives. It does not try to appeal to the intellectuals by laying claim to great originality of thought or to the multitude by promising the easy fulfilment of human desires either upon this earth or in some supernatural dream-world. But Humanism does make room for the various aspects of human nature. Though it sets up reason as the final judge of what is true and good and beautiful, it gives ample scope to the emotional side of man.

Humanism is a many-faceted philosophy, congenial to this modern age, yet fully aware of the lessons of history and the richness of the philosophic tradition. Its task is to organize into a consistent and intelligible whole the chief elements of philosophic truth that it can find in the past or present and to make that synthesis a powerful force and reality in the minds and actions of living men. What, then, are the basic principles of Humanism that define its position and distinguish it from other philosophic viewpoints? There are, as I see it, eight central propositions in the Humanist philosophy:

First, Humanism believes in a naturalistic cosmology or metaphysics or attitude toward the universe that rules out all forms of the supernatural and that regards Nature as the totality of being and as a constantly changing system of events which exists independently of any mind or consciousness.

Second, Humanism, drawing especially upon the proven facts of science, believes that man is an evolutionary product of this great Nature of which he is part and that he

is an inseparable unity of body and personality having no individual survival beyond death.

Third, Humanism believes that human thinking is as natural as walking or breathing, that it is indivisibly conjoined with the functioning of the brain, and that ideas, far from existing independently in some separate realm, arise and have reality only when a complex living organism such as man is interacting with its environment and is intellectually active.

Fourth, Humanism believes that man has the power and potentiality of solving his own problems successfully, relying primarily on reason and scientific method to do so and to enlarge continually his knowledge of the truth.

Fifth, Humanism believes, in opposition to all theories of universal predestination, determinism or fatalism, that human beings possess true freedom of creative action and are, within reasonable limits, the masters of their own destiny.

Sixth, Humanism believes in an ethics or morality that grounds all human values in this-earthly experiences and relationships; and that holds as its highest loyalty the this-worldly happiness, freedom and progress — economic, cultural and ethical — of all mankind, irrespective of nation, race or religion.

Seventh, Humanism believes in the widest possible development of art and of the awareness of beauty, including the appreciation of external Nature, so that the aesthetic experience may become a pervasive reality in the life of men.

Eighth, Humanism believes in a far-reaching social

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program that stands for the establishment throughout the world of democracy and peace on the foundations of a flourishing and cooperative economic order, both national and international.<sup>1</sup>

These eight points embody Humanism in what I believe is its most acceptable modern form. This philosophy can be more explicitly characterized as scientific Humanism, secular Humanism, naturalistic Humanism or democratic Humanism, depending on the emphasis that one wishes to give. Whatever it be called, Humanism is the viewpoint that men have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness; that human happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources; that in any case the supernatural, usually conceived of in the form of heavenly gods or immortal heavens, does not exist; and that human beings, using their own intelligence and cooperating liberally with one another, can build an enduring citadel of peace and beauty upon this earth.

It is true that no people has yet come near to establishing the ideal society. Yet Humanism asserts that man's own reason and efforts are man's best and, indeed, only hope; and that man's refusal to recognize this point is one of the chief causes of his failures throughout history. In times of confusion and disintegration like the present, men face the temptation of fleeing to some compensatory realm of make-believe or supernatural solace. Humanism stands uncompromisingly against this tendency, which both expresses and encourages defeatism. The Humanist

philosophy persistently strives to remind men that their only home is in this mundane world. There is no use of our searching elsewhere for happiness and fulfilment, for there is no place else to go. We human beings must find our destiny and our promised land in the here and now, or not at all. And Humanism is interested in a future life, not in the sense of some fabulous heaven in the skies, but as the on-going enjoyment of earthly existence by generation after generation through eternities of time.

On the ethical and social side Humanism without hesitation sets up the service of one's fellow-men as the ultimate moral ideal. It holds that the individual can find his own highest good in working for the good of all, which of course includes himself and his family. In this sophisticated and disillusioned era Humanism emphatically rejects, as psychologically naive and scientifically unsound, the widespread notion that human beings are moved merely by self-interest. It repudiates the constant rationalization of brute egotism into pretentious schemes on behalf of individuals or groups bent on self-aggrandizement. It refuses to accept the reduction of human motivation to economic terms, to sexual terms, to pleasure-seeking terms or to *any* one limited set of human desires. It insists on the importance and possibility of genuine altruism in the affairs of men.

Since we live during a time of nationalism run wild, of terrible world wars, of hate and misunderstanding between peoples and governments, I want to underscore at the start Humanism's goal of the welfare of *all* mankind.



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In its primary connotation Humanism means simply human-being-ism, that is, devotion to the interests of human beings, wherever they live and whatever their status. Though certain groups in certain countries have in the past put themselves beyond the pale of human decency, and though this could happen again, Humanism cannot tolerate discrimination against any people or nation as such. Current Humanism reaffirms the spirit of cosmopolitanism, of international friendship and the essential brotherhood of man.

An English bishop recently asserted that "fifty per cent of the intelligent people of the modern world are Humanists."<sup>3</sup> Most of the individuals to whom he refers probably do not call themselves Humanists and may never have taken the trouble to find out to what precise school of philosophy they belong. It is important, however, that all those who actually are Humanists should come to recognize in the word *Humanism* the symbol of their central purpose in life, their community of interests and their sense of fellowship. As Mr. Walter Lippmann has written in his Humanist book, *A Preface To Morals*, "If civilization is to be coherent and confident it must be *known* in that civilization what its ideals are."<sup>4</sup> This implies that those ideals shall be given a habitation and a name in some philosophy.

Now much that is essentially Humanist in twentieth-century civilization is not openly acknowledged to be so. In the United States, where there is so much confusion of spirit and intellect, we have seen a steady decline in supernatural religion and a steady increase in mere lip-

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service to outworn religious concepts or their limitation to ceremonial occasions. No nation in the world is more secular and this-worldly, more truly Humanist, in its predominant interests than America. These secular trends have extended to the Sabbath. Automobiles, the massive Sunday newspapers, golf and baseball, the radio and the motion picture have made tremendous inroads on the day of worship and have transformed it into primarily an occasion for indiscriminate recreation.

In order to keep their following, the churches themselves have turned more and more to philanthropic activities and the Social Gospel, that is, away from concern with the future joys and punishments of the next world to concern with the present needs of their parishioners and humanity in this world. Modern secularization has penetrated deep into the great organized religious bodies. In Protestant circles the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association have sought to attract youth into religious paths by providing facilities for social life, lodging, sports and vocational training. Even the Catholic Church, which has retained with little compromise its traditional theology, has bowed to secular pressures by instituting organizations with a lay purpose and program, such as the Knights of Columbus and the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

America's belief in democracy and progress, its buoyant optimism and idealism, its reliance on science and invention, all fit into the Humanist pattern. Our increasing dependence on the machine and on scientific techniques

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tends to do away with old-time appeals to the supernatural. The stronghold of supernatural religion has always been in the country rather than in the city. But today the spread of urban culture generally and of scientific methods in agriculture has radically altered the outlook of the rural population. Modern farmers turn more and more to tractors, irrigation, flood control and the rotation of crops to solve their problems, in place of last-minute prayers to supernatural forces.

There is a great deal in the American tradition that is fundamentally Humanist in character. In fact, our Declaration of Independence gave resounding affirmation to the social aims of Humanism when it proclaimed that "all men" have the unalienable right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This generalization was clearly meant to apply to human beings everywhere and not just to the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies. Accordingly, the famous document that launched the United States on its career as an independent nation makes a close approach to the cardinal Humanist doctrine that holds out the welfare of humanity at large as the final goal.

The author of the Declaration himself, Thomas Jefferson, described by Charles and Mary Beard as "the natural leader of a humanistic democracy," displayed Humanist trends in his thinking and asserted of the American republican experiment: "Nor are we acting for ourselves alone, but for the whole human race."<sup>5</sup> Abraham Lincoln expanded on this Humanist thought in his Independence Hall speech of 1861 in which he defined the "great principle" that had held the United States to-

gether for so long: "It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance."<sup>6</sup>

The Preamble to the American Constitution gives a significant summary of Humanist purposes limited to a national scale. Thus: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." The specific concern here for future generations is unusual and is definitely an advanced Humanist idea. It is worthy of note, too, that both the Preamble and the Constitution itself omit all reference to Deity. The First Amendment to the Constitution further clears the way for secular interests by guaranteeing separation between the state and religion.

Other and more recent documents of a Humanist nature are the Atlantic Charter of 1941, setting forth the sound international objectives of the United Nations, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's address in the same year outlining the Four Freedoms and declaring them essential "everywhere in the world." There can be no doubt that the United States and the United Nations fought and

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won the Second World War on a program of typically Humanist objectives. In that conflict the Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, of the Allied countries stood together against Fascist domination with the atheists and materialists of Soviet Russia, the Buddhists and Confucianists of China, the Hindus and Moslems of India, and the Jews from every quarter of the globe.

On the other hand, most of the Christians in Germany, Italy and the Axis satellites strenuously supported the evil cause of Adolf Hitler. The issues, then, that made the United Nations allies and that differentiated them from the Fascist countries did not revolve around any form of supernatural religion. Those issues centered upon ethical, social and political questions with purely this-worldly implications. In short, the issues in the greatest war in history were fundamentally Humanist.

Insofar as any philosophy has united the American people during the first half of the twentieth century, it has been a Humanist philosophy of democracy, even though many Americans are still either ignorant of or hostile to its true meaning. Just as the Four Freedoms of democracy became a rallying cry during the Second World War, so during the First World War the most effective American slogan was President Woodrow Wilson's: "The world must be made safe for democracy." The American concept in its broadest sense implies not only allegiance to democracy as the best *method* of conducting political life and settling disputes, but also allegiance to democracy as a *goal* which envisages an increased sharing in material and cultural goods on the part of all of the people.

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I am suggesting that while the American people as a whole do not yet recognize clearly the direction in which they are moving, their everyday pattern of existence and their highest aims implicitly embody the viewpoint of Humanism. Americans are ready and waiting for an inclusive philosophy of life which will be the intellectual incarnation of their actual practices and ideals and to which they can give their undivided loyalty. It is my contention that Humanism is that philosophy. As for the large social-economic programs of the contemporary world centering around such terms as capitalism, free enterprise, collectivism, socialism and communism, Humanism should be able to illumine them to a considerable degree. But no matter what happens to these programs in the light of human events and the march of history, no matter which ones succeed or do not succeed, the philosophy of Humanism will always remain pertinent.

If this philosophy approximates the truth in its underlying generalizations, then it is a philosophy which, with some changes in phraseology, was appropriate to ancient times and that in the main will hold good for the shape of things to come. Economic and political systems will come and go, nations and empires and civilizations rise and fall, but Humanism, as a philosophic system in which mankind's interests upon this earth are the first word and the last word, can never become obsolete. Naturally, however, any particular expression of Humanism will eventually be superseded.

The humanistic spirit, then, while finding wider and more conscious formulation in the modern era and in the

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more developed nations, has been inherent and struggling for expression in the race of man since first he appeared upon this planet. So Humanism sums up not only the current tendencies of mankind to construct a more truly human world, but also the best in men's aspirations throughout the age-long history of human thought and endeavor.

### 3. *Different Kinds of Humanists*

As I pointed out earlier, Humanism as a word has several meanings and it is essential to distinguish among them. If we are considering the history of culture, the term usually refers to the European Renaissance or awakening, which started in Italy during the fourteenth century and later spread to the rest of the continent and to England.

Renaissance Humanism was first and foremost a revolt against the other-worldliness of mediaeval Christianity, a turning away from preoccupation with personal immortality to making the best of life in this world. Renaissance writers like Rabelais and Erasmus gave eloquent voice to this new joy in living and to the sheer exuberance of many-sided existence. For the Renaissance the ideal human being was no longer the ascetic monk, but a new type — the universal man — the fully rounded personality, delighting in every kind of this-earthly achievement. The great Italian artists, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, typified this ideal.

The Renaissance also constituted a revolt against the

authority of the Catholic Church and against the religious limitations on knowledge. And there developed among the most influential figures of this period an increasing reliance on reason instead of faith. But so far as the advancement of knowledge was concerned, the Humanist intellectual awakening consisted largely in a re-discovery of and a return to the Greek and Latin classics. This was a progressive step at the end of the Middle Ages, and obviously a knowledge of the ancient classics is always worth-while. During this period, however, concentration on the culture of Greece and Rome finally became an obstacle to the extension of knowledge in the broadest sense and particularly to the development of modern science. The fact is that many of the Renaissance Humanists displayed a profound and active disdain for natural science.

One of the most acute Renaissance thinkers, the Italian Pietro Pomponazzi, whose works were burned by the Inquisition, cast doubt on the idea of immortality and contended that a high-minded ethics did not require belief in a future life. Nonetheless, neither Pomponazzi nor better known Humanist figures like Erasmus and Montaigne, Francis Bacon and Thomas More, worked out an inclusive cosmology or theory of the universe that rejected Christian supernaturalism.

The features of permanent value in Renaissance Humanism that can be taken over by present-day Humanism are its insistence on getting away from religious control of knowledge; its immense intellectual vitality; its ideal of the well-rounded personality; and above all, its stress



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on man's enjoying whole-heartedly his life in this world. The philosophy of Humanism, then, as I am presenting it, carries on the best from the Humanist tradition of the Renaissance, developing that best in a modern and up-to-date form and retaining a significant continuity with the meaning of Humanism as exemplified by the great artists and authors of the Renaissance.

Humanism is such an old and attractive word and so weighted with favorable meanings that it has been currently adopted by various groups and persons who have little or no right to use it. Thus the Academic Humanism founded in the early nineteen-thirties by the late Professor Irving Babbitt of Harvard University and the late Paul Elmer More of Princeton emphasized a literary and educational program with supernaturalistic and reactionary tendencies. In philosophy it adhered to a false Dualism of man versus Nature. And it revived some of the bad features of Renaissance Humanism by setting up a return to the ancient classics as the foundation-stone of education and by opposing the Humanities to science. Finally, it turned the obvious need of human self-control in the sphere of ethics into a prissy and puritanical morality of decorum. This Academic Humanism had only a brief vogue on the American scene and is admittedly on the decline at present.

Then there is Catholic or Integral Humanism stemming from the impressive mediaeval synthesis of Thomas Aquinas. The foremost exponent of this theocentric Christian philosophy is the French thinker, Jacques Maritain. Though we can agree with Maritain upon certain broad

ethical and social aims, his general position is far removed from that of man-centered Humanism.

Still another version of Humanism was the subjective variety put forward at the beginning of this century by the late Oxford Don, the brilliant but erratic F. C. S. Schiller. Professor Schiller's Humanism, borrowing from the more questionable elements in the pragmatism of William James, centered around a theory of knowledge in which the personal, subjective human factor was paramount and in which objective truth tended to melt away in the haze of moral and religious wish-fulfilment. Schiller also made unacceptable compromises with supernaturalism. At the same time he was one of the few modern philosophers of note who used the word *Humanism* to denote a whole system of philosophy and who saw the great possibilities of this term.

The Humanist philosophy about which I am talking primarily can be distinguished from these other types by referring to it as *naturalistic* Humanism. I bring in the adjective *naturalistic* to show that Humanism, in its most accurate philosophical sense, implies a world-view in which Nature is everything, in which there is no supernatural and in which man is an integral part of Nature and not separated from it by any sharp cleavage or discontinuity. This philosophy of course recognizes that vast stretches of reality yet remain beyond the range of human knowledge, but it takes for granted that all future discoveries of truth will reveal an extension of *the natural* and not an altogether different realm of being, commonly referred to as the supernatural.

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I shall now give a representative, though by no means exhaustive, list of contemporary figures who, regardless of the terminology they use, belong in general to the category of naturalistic Humanism. First of all we have the two greatest American philosophers since William James, namely John Dewey and the late Morris R. Cohen. Other professional philosophers who are in essence Humanists are Professor Harold A. Larrabee of Union College; Professor Max C. Otto, formerly of the University of Wisconsin; Professor Roy Wood Sellars of the University of Michigan; Dr. John Somerville of Hunter College; and Professors Irwin Edman, John H. Randall, Jr., and Herbert W. Schneider, all of Columbia University.

Humanist educators in other fields include Roscoe Pound, former Dean of the Harvard Law School; Eduard C. Lindeman, Director of the New York School of Social Work; Robert Morss Lovett, formerly Professor of English at the University of Chicago; Harold J. Laski, the British socialist; and Gilbert Murray, the Oxford classicist. Then there are a number of well-known Humanist authors such as Harry Elmer Barnes, Max Lerner, Walter Lippmann, Archibald MacLeish, Thomas Mann, Sherman D. Wakefield, the late Sidney Webb and Lin Yutang.

Prominent scientists who support naturalistic Humanism are Albert Einstein, of Relativity fame; Julian Huxley, English biologist and Director General of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and Vilhjalmur Stefansson, anthropologist and Arctic explorer. Also coming within the Humanist

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classification are the late Luther Burbank, celebrated botanist; the late Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis; and the late Professor James H. Leuba, psychologist and expert on religious mysticism. Leading Humanist statesmen are the Frenchman, Edouard Herriot, the Russian, Maxim M. Litvinov, and the Indian, Jawaharlal Nehru.

One of the most important groups believing in naturalistic Humanism call themselves *religious* Humanists. These are composed mainly of Unitarian clergymen, such as John H. Dietrich of Minneapolis, Curtis W. Reese, Dean of the Abraham Lincoln Centre in Chicago, and Edwin H. Wilson, editor of the magazine, *The Humanist*. Another leading religious Humanist is the Reverend Charles Francis Potter, head of the First Humanist Society of New York City, which holds regular Sunday meetings. These and other clergymen, together with a number of other progressive intellectuals, issued the vigorous *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933 comprehensively summing up their viewpoint in fifteen brief propositions. In light of the usual association of religion with the supernatural in some sense and the discarding of supernaturalism by the religious Humanists, I feel that they need to justify more adequately than they have yet done their retention of the ancient and hallowed word *religion*.

I apply the same criticism to the Ethical Culture Societies, which are also close to naturalistic Humanism, but which consider themselves religious fellowships. Several adherents of Ethical Culture were signatories of the *Humanist Manifesto*. The oldest and strongest of these

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Ethical groups is the Society for Ethical Culture of New York, founded in 1876 by Dr. Felix Adler, a teacher of philosophy at Columbia. The Society is "dedicated to the ever increasing knowledge and practice and love of the right." It is federated with five other Ethical Culture Societies in leading cities of the United States in the American Ethical Union, whose object is: "To assert the supreme importance of the ethical factor in all relations of life — personal, social, national and international — apart from any theological or metaphysical considerations."<sup>1</sup> True to this fundamental formulation, the Ethical Culturists have put their emphasis on the this-earthly welfare of mankind and have followed the motto of "Deed, not creed."

Prominent figures in American Ethical Culture today are Algernon D. Black, David S. Muzzey, Jerome Nathanson and George E. O'Dell. While the movement originated in America, it has been quite influential in England where its outstanding leaders were Stanton Coit and Frederick J. Gould and where it has included some of Britain's most distinguished philosophers, scientists and authors. It has also spread to the European continent and even to Japan. An International Union of Ethical Societies was organized as far back as 1896 but is at present inactive.

Approaching naturalistic Humanism from a rather different direction are the miscellaneous varieties of contemporary Freethinkers and Rationalists in America and other countries. The Freethinkers of the West have a long tradition going back to France of the eighteenth cen-

tury when freethinking societies helped lay the intellectual foundations for the Revolution of 1789. Always anti-clerical and opposed to religious revelation and authority, the Freethinkers for a considerable period bore the brunt of the battle against ecclesiastical repression of thought. The Freethinkers in the United States are a small but militant band who, although split into several different organizations, carry on useful educational activity through their journals and meetings. A world conference of Freethinkers at London in 1946 and an American conference at Chicago in 1948 both affirmed their solidarity with modern Humanism.

The Rationalists as an organized group have been strongest in England. Their moving principle may be defined "as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority."<sup>8</sup> The English thinker, J. A. Hobson, struck a prevailing note of present-day Rationalism when in his book, *Rationalism and Humanism*, he called upon British Rationalists to move on to Humanism as "the next step," an affirmative one, following what had been a predominantly negative and iconoclastic attack on traditional religious concepts.

Finally, we find in the category of naturalistic Humanists the followers of Karl Marx, who call themselves variously Marxists, Communists or Socialists and who are active in every country of the earth. On economic, political and social issues the Marxist Humanists are of course much to the left of the other types of Humanist

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I have described. And they ordinarily use the formidable phrase *Dialectical Materialism* to designate their philosophy, though they often talk in a general way about the *Humanist* civilization of Soviet Russia and socialism. While the Marxist materialists disagree sharply on certain issues with me and with others who classify themselves as Humanists, they are unquestionably humanistic in their major tenets of rejecting the supernatural and all religious authority, of setting up the welfare of mankind in this life as the supreme goal, and of relying on science and its techniques.

My resumé of the main groups that support naturalistic Humanism may make the subject seem rather complex. But the very fact that a number of different philosophic and religious groups, whatever their public designation, are all converging on the same general Humanist position gives to this philosophy an added significance and shows how widespread it has become in the modern world. The importance of the Humanist movement cannot be fairly estimated merely in terms of those who formally describe themselves as Humanists. And where all those who are in essence Humanists can find common ground in the United States today is in the American Humanist Association, founded in 1941, with its quarterly journal, *The Humanist*, published in Salt Lake City.

This discussion ought to have made clear already that the choice of words, in the realm of philosophy as elsewhere, is a most important matter. Philosophers cannot afford to overlook the social and psychological realities of language. *Naturalism* well expresses the world-view in

which Nature and natural law are all that is; but as a word it is somewhat cold and abstract and does not in itself imply any great concern with human affairs. Moreover, in the popular mind naturalists are exclusively professional nature-lovers like John Burroughs and Donald Culross Peattie. *Naturalism* also has its own special meaning in art and literature. *Materialism* denotes the same general attitude toward the universe as Naturalism and includes an estimable code of moral values. But it has been misunderstood, particularly in the English-speaking countries, as being a crass and low-minded ethical philosophy that stresses material goods and physical pleasures to the neglect of the higher spiritual values. And as applied to Soviet culture and philosophy, *Materialism* is, in America at least, unfortunately not an objective descriptive term, but one of reproach and opprobrium.

*Humanism*, on the other hand, embodying in itself the best from the naturalist and materialist traditions, is a warm, positive, understandable term which on the face of it indicates a paramount interest in man and a corresponding lack of interest in supernaturalist preoccupations. Out of it flows naturally the implication that the supreme ethical objective is to work for a happier existence on behalf of all humanity here and now. The wide scope and unifying possibilities of *Humanism* are self-evident in that it is derived from a root that pertains to all men and not, like so many philosophies and religions, from the name of a single man. Admittedly, *Humanism* is ambiguous in the sense that it has been and is understood in diverse ways, but that is a drawback which holds true



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of many excellent words — *democracy*, for instance, or *good*. The fact is that in interpreting *Humanism* as I do in this book, I am being loyal to historical usage and to the integrity of words. And there is little doubt in my mind that this term *Humanism* constitutes the most accurate, the most appealing and the most universal rallying point for men of intelligence and good will in our modern era.

Humanism is a constructive philosophy that goes far beyond the negating of errors in thought to the wholehearted affirmation of the joys, beauties and values of human living. This is a viewpoint that can be easily grasped by the people of every culture and country. Indeed, Humanism already *is* the functioning philosophy of millions upon millions of human beings throughout the globe who are daily striving to build a better life upon this earth for themselves, their children and their fellowmen. To a mankind not yet altogether aware of its own good and goal, Humanism offers an inclusive program of philosophical and ethical truth that can play a leading role in the future of the race.

1. *Philosophic Forerunners*

Broadly speaking, whenever a thinker in any field treats the this-worldly welfare of man as central, he treads on Humanist ground. And whenever men of action or men in action so conduct themselves as to make present human happiness primary, they are functioning as Humanists for the time being, regardless of the religious and philosophical theories that they formally espouse. For Humanism the paramount concern is always the well-being of man in this existence, not in some fanciful never-never land beyond the grave.

From the Humanist viewpoint, supernatural religion and that major portion of philosophy that has functioned as the handmaiden of such religion have made man central in a perverse and exaggerated way, reading purely human traits into the universe at large. Thus most of the religions and religious philosophies hold that mind and personality, love and purpose, are attributes of reality in its very essence. They illegitimately extend the acknowledged importance of human values upon this planet to existence as a whole; they teach a cosmology of conceit and a superstitious anthropomorphism that militates against men's true good in their one and only life. Against these

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persistent and prevailing fallacies Humanism has always constituted a vigorous dissenting voice.

The first notable Humanist of whom there is reliable record was Protagoras, a Greek teacher and philosopher of the fifth century B.C., to whom Plato devoted an entire dialogue. Protagoras formulated the famous dictum, "Man is the measure of all things." This statement is too vague and subjective to be taken over without qualification by modern Humanism, but was at the time a daring and unorthodox thought. Protagoras was also an outspoken agnostic, asserting that: "As to the gods, I have no means of knowing either that they exist or do not exist. For many are the obstacles that impede knowledge, both the obscurity of the question and the shortness of human life."<sup>9</sup> For these and similar iconoclastic sentiments Protagoras was accused of impiety, his writings were publicly burned, and he himself was banished from Athens. On his way to Sicily he was drowned.

A number of other Greek philosophers in the fifth century B.C. showed a Humanist bent in that they, too, concentrated on the analysis of man rather than on the analysis of physical Nature, as the earlier generation of Greek thinkers had done. Most of them, like Protagoras, were Sophists, that is, wandering "teachers of wisdom" who discussed practically all the major issues that have ever arisen in philosophy. Plato criticized and satirized the Sophists in a way that was somewhat unfair, making them the foil of a fellow-Sophist, the wise and lovable Socrates, intellectual and moral hero of the *Dialogues*. Socrates brilliantly expounded typically Humanist max-

ims like "Know thyself" and "The good individual in the good society." While believing in a God himself and having hopes of immortality, he tried to work out an ethical system that would function independently of religious doctrine. Throughout the chief Socratic dialogues of Plato — such as the *Apology*, the *Crito*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium* and the all-embracing *Republic* itself — there is an abundance of mellow ethical philosophy, relevant for Humanism, that can be sifted out from the frequently supernaturalist and anti-democratic currents of thought in these works.

Especially in the field of ethics Humanism finds it profitable to be eclectic and to select from the most disparate philosophies and religions whatever ideas or insights seem of value. In the present chapter, however, I wish to stress the outstanding philosophies that in their world-view as well as their ethics take a Humanist position. Such, in the history of thought, are all the leading Naturalisms and Materialisms. These systems are alike opposed to the religious-tending Dualisms, like those of Plato and Descartes, which hold that there are two ultimate substances, mind and matter; and to the religious-tending Idealisms, like those of Hegel and Josiah Royce, which claim that mind alone is the basic stuff of existence.

Naturalism considers that man, the earth and the unending universe of space and time are all parts of one great Nature. The whole of existence is equivalent to Nature and outside of Nature nothing exists. This cosmology or metaphysics has no place for the supernatural, no room for super-physical beings or a super-material God,

whether Christian or non-Christian in character, from whom men can obtain favors through prayer or guidance through revelation. But the adherents of this philosophy recognize and indeed rejoice in man's close ties with the mighty and infinitely varied Nature that brought him forth and do not, like the more naive type of atheist, go about shaking their fists at the universe.

From the beginning Naturalism has supported and helped to develop the scientific outlook and man's reliance on reason. Accordingly it views man as entirely a creature of this earth and as an indissoluble unity of, on the one hand, personality, including mind, and on the other hand, body or physical structure. This naturalistic psychology is the antithesis of the dualistic psychology that denaturalizes and supernaturalizes man by placing him, or at least his mind and soul, outside of and above Nature. The naturalistic interpretation makes any form of personal survival after death out of the question and so carries with it the implication of an ethics limited to this-worldly actions and aims.

The first great naturalist in the history of philosophy, though by no means a consistent one, was Aristotle, most universal of Greek philosophers, who lived in the fourth century B.C. Aristotle, student of Plato at the renowned Academy in Athens and tutor of Alexander the Great, was a biologist and psychologist as well as a philosopher; the founder of science as a discipline and an organized, inter-related body of fact. His broad and penetrating genius explored, and then extended, practically the whole range of knowledge as it existed in his day. Though Aristotle's

underlying purpose was to explain rather than to reform the world, he arrived at many conclusions that are usable by those who would re-make society. Perhaps most important in this connection was his emphasis on the fact of process in Nature and civilization, although his analysis of motion and change remained far from scientific and although the idea of evolution apparently did not occur to him.

Then, too, he established on a firm foundation that naturalistic psychology, still frequently called the "Aristotelian" psychology, that looks upon man as a living combination of soul and body. Though, as I said, this view rules out the possibility of a personal after-existence, Aristotle talked of the "active intellect" as immortal, without meaning that he thought there was a worth-while future life for the full human personality with its memory and sense of self-identity. He likewise used the word *God* in an abstract manner very different from its customary significance. Aristotle's God was not a personal one consciously caring for the world and mankind, but the Prime Mover, an Unmoved Magnet, the eternal source of motion in the universe, stirring everything to activity through the force of attraction.

Thus Aristotle marred the purity of his Naturalism by indulging in a confusing redefinition of supernaturalist concepts — a tendency that has ever been the bane of philosophy — and made it easier for the Catholic Church many centuries later to incorporate his thought with seeming logic into its theology. There were other serious faults in the philosophy of Aristotle, such as his justification of

slavery and belief in the natural inferiority of women. Both the virtues and defects of his system had an undue influence because of the tremendous prestige of the man himself, referred to right up to the modern era as "the Master . . . of those that know," in Dante's admiring words. Mankind always needs to be on guard against becoming subservient to the giants of the past.

The tradition of philosophic Naturalism that Aristotle established, while entering to some extent into various materialistic world-views, did not really come into its own again until more than two thousand years later when Benedict Spinoza appeared upon the scene in Holland of the seventeenth century. Spinoza is considered by many as the most eminent of all modern philosophers. His greatest book was the *Ethics*, which treats not merely of ethical problems, but compresses into its fewer than three hundred pages a complete philosophy of life. Cast into the general pattern of geometry, with numbered propositions, demonstrations, corollaries and Q.E.D.'s following one another in strictly logical sequence, this brilliant volume of Spinoza is generally acknowledged as one of the supreme masterpieces of the philosophic intellect.

Spinoza's stress on mathematical method and form shows to what an extent he had absorbed and approved the new science. His philosophical Naturalism and naturalistic psychology embodied the epoch-making scientific developments of the two past centuries starting with the Copernican revolution. "The order and connection of ideas," wrote Spinoza, "is the same as the order and connection of things."<sup>10</sup> And no convincing theory of knowl-

edge has since been able to ignore this formulation. However, like Aristotle in ancient Greece, Spinoza compromised with religious terminology by bringing into his philosophy something he called *immortality* and something he called *God*.

Again, as in Aristotle, his definition of these terms was far removed from ordinary usage. By immortality Spinoza meant, not the duration of the personality beyond the grave, but the attainment of a certain high quality of thought and action in the present existence and the fact that a man's life, when it is over, becomes part of the unchanging and eternal past. By God he meant, not a super-material being possessing the attributes of purpose, justice, consciousness and love, but simply the totality of Nature.

Spinoza has constantly been accused of being an atheist, and I believe rightly so in relation to the Judeo-Christian tradition. At the same time, because he so accented "the intellectual love of God" (or Nature), he is often referred to as "the God-intoxicated man." The truth is that Spinoza did not believe in either God or immortality as usually defined; but subject as he was to persecution by both Church and State on account of his unorthodox ideas, it may be that he actually preserved his life and liberty through his highly intellectualized redefinitions of God and immortality.

Spinoza had good grounds for being nervous, since Bruno had been executed as a heretic at the beginning of the seventeenth century and Galileo forced to recant by the Inquisition during Spinoza's own lifetime. Furthermore,



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two of Spinoza's best friends in Holland were the victims of a brutal political murder and his own security was continually threatened. His *chef-d'oeuvre*, the *Ethics*, actually did not appear until after his death for the reason that Spinoza kept postponing its publication for fear of the consequences. In a letter to a friend Spinoza said that because his enemies had lodged "a complaint against me with the prince and magistrates" and because "the theologians were everywhere lying in wait for me, I determined to put off my attempted publication until such time as I should see what turn affairs would take."<sup>11</sup>

Subsequent to Spinoza, Naturalism, everywhere a minority and unpopular viewpoint for all but a fraction of history, lapsed again to a large degree until the second half of the nineteenth century. It then came back into the mainstream of Western thought with renewed vigor, receiving a fresh and lasting impulse from Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. What Darwin and his fellow-biologists did, through marshaling incontestable evidence of the evolution of man from lower forms of life, was to demonstrate that no wide and impassable gulf exists between *homo sapiens* and the rest of Nature. This undermined some of the most powerful arguments of religious supernaturalism and of the traditional philosophies associated with it, giving most convincing support to the major naturalist thesis that man and all of his experience are in every respect a part of Nature.

Naturalist trends in Europe greatly increased as a result of Darwin's work. But the revival of Naturalism

as an explicit philosophy in intellectual and academic circles took place chiefly in the United States, where its three elder statesmen were the late Professor Morris R. Cohen of the College of the City of New York, the late Professor Frederick J. E. Woodbridge of Columbia University, and Professor Emeritus John Dewey of Columbia. Columbia, under the original inspiration of Woodbridge and Dewey and now under the leadership of a younger group of able teachers such as Edman, Randall and Schneider, has developed the strongest and most influential school of Naturalism in America.

John Dewey, who saw so clearly the full implications for philosophy of the Darwinian revolution in biology, was by timely coincidence born in the very year in which *The Origin of Species* appeared. It is Dewey's hard-headed empirical viewpoint, as set forth in books like *Experience and Nature* and *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, that constitutes the most scientific and up-to-date version of Naturalism. While Dewey makes room for a very much refined "religion," he completely discards all supernatural forces and entities and regards mind as an instrument of survival and adaptation developed in the long process of evolution. In much of his work Dewey has followed the lead of William James, Harvard's versatile physiologist, psychologist, philosopher and teacher, but he has eliminated the subjective elements that marred the latter's pragmatism. Unfortunately Dr. Dewey's rather ponderous literary style has increased the misunderstandings inevitable in the interpretation of any profound thinker.

In my opinion Dewey is the twentieth-century philoso-

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pher who has best understood modern science and scientific method and who has most cogently developed their meaning for philosophy and culture. He places reliance throughout on experimental intelligence as the most dependable way to solve the problems that face the individual and society. Now intelligence, reason, thought, when most effective, are all nothing more nor less than scientific method in application. And Dewey's most persistent plea is that men should exercise rigorous scientific method in every sector of their lives and that the most profound need of our day is to extend scientific thinking from the natural sciences to the broad field of social, economic and political affairs. His full-fledged Naturalism is, then, a massive philosophic system which is not only itself based on science, but which also considers the advancement of science in every sphere as the best hope of the human race.

Since the First World War Naturalism has come increasingly to the fore in American philosophy and promises to continue its gains in the future. For three centuries anti-naturalist and anti-Humanist philosophies were dominant on the American continent. These consisted either of Protestant and Catholic theologies or, in the nineteenth century, of transcendental and idealistic cosmologies originating primarily in Germany, and inspired particularly by Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel. The influence of Idealism became especially marked in the universities. Paradoxically, however, while "our professed philosophies have endlessly refuted Naturalism . . . our practiced philosophies have steadily confirmed it."<sup>12</sup> And

the recent advance of Naturalism has without question furthered the Humanist goal of bringing American theory consciously into line with the secular and scientific temper of America in action.

Closely related to Naturalism in its basic world-view and similarly a strong bulwark for Humanism is the philosophy of Materialism, holding that the foundation-stone of all being is matter in motion. Like Naturalism, Materialism relies first and foremost on scientific method, believes in the ultimate atomic structure of things and finds in Nature an order and a process that can be expressed in scientific laws of cause and effect. But Materialism has stressed matter as such more than Nature and tended until recently to over-simplify and over-mechanize, reducing the complex behavior of the human organism to the same sort of laws that are germane to inanimate existence. The correct view, however, would seem to be that human thinking and feeling, though functions of the body and dependent upon it, operate at a level qualitatively far removed from atomic energy in its simpler forms. Another point about Materialism is that it has usually gone hand in hand with an outspoken anti-religious position and has been less prone to compromise with religious terminology. It has also often been associated, particularly in modern times, with radical political movements. Naturalism's less militant attitude in general is perhaps the chief reason why it is sometimes called a "polite" Materialism.

Materialism has exercised as long and far-reaching an influence on human thought as Naturalism. The earlier

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Greek philosophers of the sixth century B.C., men like Thales, Anaximander and Heraclitus, tended in the direction of a naive Materialism. They made brilliant guesses to the effect that everything is part of one substance or stuff such as water, air or fire. The first complete and consistent materialist, however, was Democritus, the so-called laughing philosopher, who flourished about the year 400 B.C. and developed systematically the idea that the whole universe is composed in the last analysis of tiny material particles — atoms of different size, shape and configuration whirling swiftly through the void and interacting according to a definite causal sequence. Thus Democritus was the Father of the Atomic Theory, finally proved true by science some 2300 years later.

There is an old anecdote about Democritus that well illustrates the difference between the scientific and the supernaturalist approach. A respected citizen, we are told, of Democritus' town was out walking one day, with no covering on his bald head, when a tortoise inexplicably fell upon him out of the sky and killed him. Since an eagle, the bird of the god Zeus, had been seen hovering above at the time of the accident, the neighbors began to spread the rumor that the death of their fellow-citizen was a miraculous happening of divine portent. But "Democritus gave the event a thoroughly naturalistic explanation, resolutely dismissing talk of the supernatural or of fate. Eagles like the meat of tortoises, but sometimes find it difficult to get them from the shell. They have, therefore, learned to drop the creatures from a great height on shining rocks, which shatter the shell and make

available the meat. The eagle had simply mistaken the man's head for the splendor of a rock."<sup>13</sup>

More than a century later Epicurus took over the theory of Democritus, adding the important point that in the swirl of the atoms chance deviations take place that break the chain of complete determinism and make room for human freedom of choice. Epicurus had strong ethical grounds for preferring a materialistic system, since he wanted to see men live in the light of reason and without fear. Accordingly he tried to eliminate apprehensions about the supernatural by teaching that there were no deities who intervened in human affairs and that mortal men had no existence after death. This negation of religious doctrines was a prerequisite, in the judgment of Epicurus, for attaining individual happiness on earth. Such happiness he defined in terms of the more refined pleasures, guided by wisdom and adjusted to the hard realities of life. The Epicureans placed affection or friendship among the highest goods of experience. Epicurus himself retired to his garden to live quietly, abstemiously and nobly, achieving a kind of philosophic saintliness. Yet Epicureanism has come to mean generally the pursuit of sensual enjoyment; the philosophy *par excellence* of wine, women and song. And Epicurus remains perhaps the outstanding example of a great philosopher who has been perpetually misunderstood.

When we come to the period of Rome's supremacy in the ancient world, we find that the greatest of Roman philosophers, Lucretius, was a disciple of Epicurus and based his masterly work, *On the Nature of Things*, upon

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his system. This classic of both literature and philosophy, the finest philosophic poem ever produced as well as the most eloquent exposition of Materialism, rendered into the exquisite forms of Latin verse a detailed account of the Epicurean view of life. Lucretius had a profound appreciation for the beauty and sublimity of Nature, and his magnificent descriptions of the natural world in its various aspects of loveliness and grandeur have hardly been equalled in philosophic writing since his day.

Despite their frank and open crusade against religious superstition, both Lucretius and Epicurus made one concession to convention and tradition. That was their admission that far away in the intermediate spaces of the heavens there existed blessed beings or gods who led a life of uninterrupted enjoyment and contemplation, totally undisturbed by any duties pertaining to the management of the cosmos or the fate of men. Since these do-nothing gods had no concern with human affairs, men need have no concern with them and could go their way as free and unperturbed as if such beings were purely fanciful. Lucretius and Epicurus regarded their gesture toward the old mythology as harmless and evidently indulged in it mainly to escape being branded as outright atheists, ever a dangerous accusation in most cultures and countries.

Like Naturalism, Materialism as a system found little favor or expression during the long period between the civilizations of antiquity and the modern era. Following the efforts of Francis Bacon, himself no materialist, on behalf of a revival of science to substitute the Empire of

Man over Nature for that of Man over Man, his former secretary, Thomas Hobbes, gave Materialism a methodical and thorough-going formulation in the seventeenth century. Hobbes' interpretation of Materialism was unusual in that he made it the basis for political conservatism and suggested that God was corporeal. This latter idea, paradoxical as it may seem, stems from the logical position, likewise held by some of the early Church Fathers, that there can be no such thing as an incorporeal substance and that God, if he exists, must have a body. Hobbes was also an iconoclast in undertaking criticism of the Bible on documentary grounds. It is no wonder that the Church of England looked upon him as a doubtful ally, some of the more intolerant bishops wishing to have him burned as a heretic. And it is more than possible that Hobbes, who in his best-known book, *The Leviathan*, attacked even Aristotle for compromising with religion because of "fearing the fate of Socrates," at times wrote about God and other religious topics with his tongue in his cheek.

The most significant resurgence of Materialism, however, took place in France during the second half of the eighteenth century as part of the great Enlightenment that stirred to its depths the Western World. The French Encyclopedists such as La Mettrie and Helvetius, Holbach and Diderot, were able to utilize the materialist philosophy as a powerful weapon against religious superstition and the reactionary Catholic Church. In his *System of Nature* Baron d'Holbach summed up the materialist attitude toward religious supernaturalism: "If we go back



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to the beginning, we shall find that ignorance and fear created the gods; that fancy, enthusiasm or deceit adorned or disfigured them; that weakness worships them; that credulity preserves them; and that custom respects and tyranny supports them in order to make the blindness of men serve its own interests."<sup>14</sup> And the uncompromising Diderot exclaimed: "Men will never be free until the last king is strangled in the entrails of the last priest!"<sup>15</sup> These French materialists, however, maintained the mechanistic fallacies I have already mentioned and in addition extended them to their social theory.

During the nineteenth century leadership in the materialist movement passed to Germany and to such men as Jacob Moleschott and Ernst Haeckel, Ludwig Buchner and Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Haeckel was the first important German biologist who whole-heartedly accepted the Darwinian doctrine of organic evolution. He used that theory as the cornerstone of his popular philosophic work, *The Riddle of the Universe*, wherein he showed conclusively that the mind as well as the body of man had evolved from animal species.

The brilliant Feuerbach, a much under-rated figure in most histories of philosophy, broke with orthodoxy early in his career and lost his teaching post after it was discovered that he was the author of an anonymous treatise attacking the idea of personal immortality. In his most significant book, *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach demonstrated that the mythologies of traditional religion have their source in unfulfilled human feelings, longings and needs. Men deify their inward nature by projecting

it outward as the idea of God; "God is the highest subjectivity of man abstracted from himself."<sup>16</sup> The essential predicates of Divinity, such as personality and love, are simply the human qualities men evaluate most highly. Although Feuerbach is ordinarily classified as a materialist, he himself at one time considered Humanism as the most appropriate name for his philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

Feuerbach had a profound influence on the philosophic development of Marx and Engels. It was he, as Engels states, who "in many respects forms an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and our own conception."<sup>18</sup> The Dialectical Materialism of Marx and Engels corrected the mechanistic errors of the earlier materialist tradition and gave full recognition to the dynamic, ever-changing character of existence and to the infinite inter-relatedness of phenomena in both Nature and society. While Dialectical Materialism considers that human thought is a function of the bodily organism, it believes that the mind is no mere passive reflector of the outside world, but that it possesses a fundamental initiative and creativity, a power of working upon and remolding the environment through the force of new ideas.

At the same time the Marxist materialists have carried on and developed the intransigent anti-religious doctrines of the Materialisms that preceded them. Today there can be little question that Dialectical Materialism, while having its own shortcomings, is the most influential variety of Materialism, both because of its consistency and inclusiveness and also because it is the official philosophy

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of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties throughout the world.

There are other philosophies of the past which, while not specifically within either the naturalist or materialist category, give strong support to the Humanist position. For example, Auguste Comte, French thinker of the middle nineteenth century, made a stimulating if somewhat erratic approach to a consistent Humanism. Taking the facts and methods of science as his starting point, Comte worked out a far-reaching system, which he called *Positivism*. He used the word *positive*, not as the opposite of *negative*, but as meaning scientifically certain or assured.

During his late forties Comte reacted against his earlier intellectualism following a deep emotional crisis associated with his passionate love for a beautiful woman and her untimely death. He formulated a species of humanistic mysticism and transformed Positivism into a complex Religion of Humanity, replete with ceremonies, sacraments, priests and temples. For the worship of God he substituted the worship of Man and for the calendar of Christian saints a select list of the heroes of human progress. Thus Positivism, patterning its liturgy closely after that of the Roman Catholic Church, assumed some of the objectionable features of a religious cult. It was, moreover, a cult over-personalized in the image of its egotistic founder, for the two most prominent statues in the positivist temples were usually those of the Sistine Madonna and Auguste Comte. Comte had a considerable vogue throughout the Western World, but his thought took deeper root in Latin America than in the United States. In the Brazi-

lian capital of Rio de Janeiro a Comtist Temple of Humanity still functions and proclaims as its cardinal precept: "Order is the basis, love the principle and progress the end."

In England the versatile John Stuart Mill developed and included in his philosophy of Utilitarianism the more scientific aspects of Comte's work, shunning the religious and mystical elements in it. Mill's writings also served as an invaluable stimulus to those democratic ideals that mean so much to Humanism. His essay *On Liberty* ranks with Milton's *Areopagitica* as one of the classic statements on freedom of thought and the rights of the individual. "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion," declared Mill, "and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. . . . All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility."<sup>19</sup>

Positivism also inspired Herbert Spencer, systematic and system-building British philosopher who outlined a general theory of evolution several years before Darwin issued *The Origin of Species* and who continued, after that great event, to apply the evolutionary hypothesis to every sector of human history and thought. Spencer promoted his interpretation of evolution with such zeal that he overreached and discredited himself. For he advocated a hard-boiled theory, supposedly based on the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest, that in society the economically successful, the biologically fit and the morally good are roughly equivalent. In regard to the

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supernatural and the unseen world Spencer was an agnostic, that is, one who believes there is not sufficient evidence either to prove or disprove the existence of God and immortality. The originator of the useful word *agnostic* was Thomas H. Huxley, noted English biologist and popularizer of the Darwinian theory. Since agnostics are doubtful about the supernatural, they tend to be Humanists in practice.

Although it is difficult to classify Bertrand Russell, the leading English philosopher of the twentieth century and a member of the House of Lords, I think that he properly belongs in the tradition of naturalistic Humanism. His system is full of contradictions and has never shaken off the taint of subjectivistic theories of knowledge. Russell believes that the basic stuff of the universe is neither mind nor matter, but a neutral substance. This substance, however, exists objectively outside of the perceiving mind, bears no supernaturalistic overtones and has no solicitude for man's values. In his earlier years Russell was a militant social reformer. Due to his pacific views during the First World War, Cambridge University dismissed him and the British Government imprisoned him for six months. In 1940 the College of the City of New York, in an outrageous violation of academic freedom, forced Russell out of his professorship of philosophy on account of his opinions in the sphere of religion and sex morals.

Another distinguished philosopher not easy to label, but who has made signal contributions to Humanism, is George Santayana, who was born in Spain, came to maturity in the United States and has spent the creative

evening of his life in Italy where he has resided since the First World War. It is my considered judgment that Mr. Santayana writes philosophy more beautifully than any other thinker since Plato; and his work, which includes poetry, the novel and autobiography, can be read as much for its literary charm as for its intellectual stimulus. His philosophic approach has always been of a most sophisticated and urbane kind, treating supernatural religion, for instance, as poetic myth to be enjoyed and understood rather than as dark superstition to be fought and eradicated. Santayana's essential tenderness toward the religious tradition has led one wit aptly to say: "Santayana believes that there is no God, and that Mary is His mother." During his later years Santayana has come to take a somewhat reactionary position on political and economic issues.

Santayana's volumes abound with aphorisms that clearly have a Humanist intent, as when he tells us that "men became superstitious not because they had too much imagination, but because they were not aware that they had any"<sup>20</sup>; and that "the love of God is said to be the root of Christian charity, but is in reality only its symbol."<sup>21</sup> As contrasted, however, with the sound approach of his earlier period and his greatest work, *The Life of Reason*, Santayana in the latter part of his career has much weakened his philosophy by bringing into it an esoteric doctrine of essences, which, much like the old Platonic ideas, are supposed to subsist in an eternal realm apart from the regular course of Nature. It is this feature of Santayana's thought that led John Dewey to criticize it as

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“broken-backed Naturalism.” Santayana sometimes talks of himself as a naturalist, sometimes as a Humanist, but prefers to think of his system as a species of Materialism.

A current philosophy sometimes classed as Humanist is the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, French author and playwright of unquestionable literary merit. His mercurial philosophic work has become something of a fad for intellectuals in quest of a fashionable *avant-garde* program. A number of Christian theologians are existentialists, but Sartre’s wing of the movement is humanistic in its rejection of the supernatural. His existentialism, however, parts company with true Humanism in its accenting of the subjective as the point of departure for philosophy, in its extremes of pessimism grounded in human despair and the alleged “nausea” of existence, in its neglect of modern scientific method, and in its reliance on solitary individualistic effort rather than collective action and social reconstruction for the overcoming of man’s ills.

Though contemporary Humanism cannot accept *in toto* any of the Naturalisms, Materialisms or allied philosophies discussed above, it must draw primarily, insofar as it depends on past thought, upon these great systems that I have outlined. Today all philosophy of the first rank must to some extent be eclectic and acknowledge its heavy debt to thinkers who have come before. To maintain otherwise is to strike an intellectual pose. Humanism is not interested in novelty as such. Its question is not whether an idea is old or new, familiar or daring, but whether it is true and relevant to the Humanist outlook.

Even systems such as those of Dualism and Idealism, with which Humanists so profoundly disagree, have much to teach us. Almost every philosophy contains some important elements that are sound. And in general it is far more fruitful to try to understand why certain philosophers went astray than to neglect or scorn them. Brilliant errors, tenaciously pursued unto their remotest implication, can be most illuminating and suggestive in the search for truth. That search follows no royal road, smooth and straight, but meets many obstacles, makes many false starts, goes off on many attractive but misleading by-paths. It is a search, too, which is never-ending, yet which each generation can push forward to new discoveries and triumphs.

## *2. Religious Roots of Humanism*

Unquestionably the great religious leaders like Buddha and Confucius and Jesus have made a substantial contribution, on the ethical side, to the Humanist tradition. The original teachings of both Buddha and Confucius are to some degree shrouded in obscurity, but it seems most unlikely that either of them believed in supernaturalism in the sense of the existence of a personal God and personal immortality. And it is dubious indeed whether either of these wise and humble men would have approved of the complex priest-ridden religions, interlarded with all sorts of naive superstitions, that eventually became organized around their names. Buddha, especially, would no doubt have been surprised



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and horrified to find himself elevated to the status of a Divinity, devoutly worshipped by hundreds of millions of people throughout the East and with his image graven in innumerable stone, metal and wooden statues.

Buddha's sayings, such as those embodied in the Eight-fold Path of Virtue, dealt primarily with a code of conduct for this world. He was not interested in ordinary religious rituals, sacrifices and other observances. He believed that men could overcome the miseries of life by giving up their narrow personal aims and tormenting desires. It was a high doctrine of altruism and self-renunciation, with a somewhat negative emphasis on the individual avoidance of pain and sorrow rather than an affirmative emphasis on building happiness within the good society and through social cooperation.

Confucius was much more concerned with political life than Buddha and presented the ideal of the noble man in the noble state. He laid his heaviest stress on an ethical system which looked to men's happiness here and now and which, like the ethics of Plato and Aristotle, exalted the importance of knowledge and of human inter-relationships. Concerning survival beyond the grave, Confucius would only say: "While you do not know life, what can you know about death?" He was equally uncertain concerning God and the gods.

Lin Yutang, the contemporary Chinese author, is convinced that Confucius was a true Humanist; and he describes Chinese Humanism, faithful to the spirit of Confucius, in this way: "For the Chinese the end of life lies not in life after death, for the idea that we live in order

to die, as taught by Christianity, is incomprehensible; nor in Nirvana, for that is too metaphysical; nor in the satisfaction of accomplishment, for that is too vain-glorious; nor yet in progress for progress's sake, for that is meaningless. The true end, the Chinese have decided in a singularly clear manner, lies in the enjoyment of a simple life, especially the family life, and in harmonious social relationships. . . . There is no doubt that the Chinese are in love with life, in love with this earth, and will not forsake it for an invisible heaven. They are in love with life, which is so sad and yet so beautiful, and in which moments of happiness are so precious because they are so transient."<sup>22</sup>

Turning to the West, we find that the Old Testament Hebrews, despite their vigorous supernaturalism, had little faith in a worth-while immortality for the human personality and were primarily interested in the future of the tribe or nation *in this world*. It was their earnest expectation that God would finally deliver Israel, the chosen people, into a heaven or New Jerusalem situated on this terrestrial globe. Throughout the Old Testament there runs a strong sense of the values attainable in earthly living. And a book like *Proverbs* contains a wealth of moral insight and worldly wisdom that can stand up independently of sanctions or revelations from on high. Moreover, Old Testament prophets such as Amos and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, denounced in no uncertain language the selfishness, corruption and oppression of their day. They fought on behalf of the people as against the ruling class, for the many as against the few.

Two books of the Old Testament are themselves among the greatest Humanist documents in all literature. I refer to *The Song of Solomon*, with its superb and poetic love passages, and *Ecclesiastes*, with its central theme of enjoying life while one is able, even though all human happiness and achievement is transient and in the end may seem like mere vanity. Greek influence in *Ecclesiastes* is unmistakable and its message bears a distinctly Epicurean flavor. Since the book was probably written about 200 B.C. or later, its author or authors may well have been affected directly or indirectly by the school of Epicurus.

*Ecclesiastes* reminds us that, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose."<sup>23</sup> . . . Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many."<sup>24</sup> . . . Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."<sup>25</sup>

## HUMANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY

Passing now to the New Testament, we see plainly that its theology is totally alien to the Humanist viewpoint. Yet when we objectively analyze New Testament Christianity, with its emphasis on the resurrection and eternal life of the individual, we are able to understand that this religion has displayed in its worship what is essentially a veneration of man's own highest qualities. These it attributed to God the Father and to Jesus the Son, whose deification fulfilled the need for a more human God. And when this Christ became a bit too distant, the Church wisely brought in the Virgin Mary and other saints to re-introduce the human touch.

New Testament ethics is based on the assumption that man's truly worth-while life lies in the realm of immortality. The New Testament as a document is so full of ambiguities as to correct human conduct that the devil is always quoting it for his own devious purposes. Nonetheless, the gospels have much to offer any generous and humane ethical philosophy. Running through them is a radically democratic spirit, a deep equalitarian feeling, that has been the inspiration of numberless workers for a happier mankind in this mundane sphere. Jesus raised his voice again and again on behalf of broad Humanist ideals such as the spread of altruism, the brotherhood of man, and peace on earth. According to the gospel story, he was much aware of the material needs of men and himself fed the hungry and healed the sick. Some of his specific sayings can be given a this-worldly interpretation entirely consonant with Humanism. I am thinking of such familiar statements as: "Ye shall know the truth, and

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the truth shall make you free"; and "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Humanism, then, holds that certain of the teachings of Jesus possess an ethical import that will always be pertinent for the human race; and that the Jesus portrayed by the gospels represents one of the supreme personalities of all history, a fighter against the hidebound Philistines and Pharisees of his day and a radiant martyr for the cause of humanity. This interpretation of Jesus as a great good man instead of a god has found ample support within Christianity itself. Early in the fourth century A.D. a Christian presbyter by the name of Arius initiated the famous Arian controversy by stressing the human attributes of Jesus and claiming that he was of a different substance from God the Father. In 325 the Council of Nicaea outlawed this Arian view as heresy and drew up the official Nicene Creed affirming that God was a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But the more simple and sensible Arian doctrine never died out in Christian circles and for centuries had its secret adherents.

Arianism broke forth into the open again as a major issue during the first century of the Protestant Reformation when Michael Servetus took up the battle and declared: "Your Trinity is a product of subtlety and madness. The Gospel knows nothing of it. . . . God is one and indivisible."<sup>26</sup> Both Catholic and Protestant authorities banned and burned Servetus' book *On the Errors of the Trinity*. Servetus escaped from the agents of the Catholic

Inquisition only to be recaptured by the police of John Calvin, Protestant "Pope" and dictator of Geneva. Calvin, whose own intolerance was scarcely less than that of the Inquisition itself, brought Servetus quickly to trial for his heresies and had him burned at the stake in 1553. Far from halting the ideas of Michael Servetus, the flame that reduced his body to ashes helped mightily to fan into vigorous life the modern Unitarian movement throughout Europe.

This Unitarian movement, insisting on the oneness of God and the essential humanity of Jesus Christ, became a powerful influence in Poland at the end of the sixteenth century under the leadership of Faustus Socinus, spread to England in the seventeenth century and took root across the Atlantic in America in the eighteenth. For a long time the Unitarians did not favor setting up a separate denomination. And it was only in 1825 that they broke away from the Congregationalists and officially established their own Unitarian organization in Europe and the United States. From the beginning the stronghold of the American Unitarians was in New England where William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson were their acknowledged leaders. While the world-view of the Unitarians was certainly non-Humanist, they were on the whole liberals in theology and also backed most of the important social reforms of the nineteenth century. They gave emphasis, too, to the right of individual religious freedom and welcomed into the Unitarian fellowship even those who questioned the existence of a personal God.

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Approximately a hundred years after the founding of Unitarianism the more advanced members of this sect, most of them from the Middle West, started the movement known as religious Humanism. Dr. Curtis W. Reese, long a Unitarian pastor, precipitated the discussions that led to religious Humanism by a challenging sermon at Des Moines in 1917 and an address at the Harvard Divinity School in 1920. Philosophers, teachers, writers and clergymen quickly entered into the debate; and the result was the definite emergence of Humanism in religion, eventually culminating in the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933. This key document was initiated by three Unitarian ministers, L. M. Birkhead, now Director of the Friends of Democracy, Raymond B. Bragg, now of Minneapolis, and Edwin H. Wilson, now of Salt Lake City; and by two college professors, Roy Wood Sellars of the University of Michigan and A. Eustace Haydon of the University of Chicago.

In an able sermon delivered in 1925 the Reverend John H. Dietrich showed how Unitarianism had naturally laid the basis for Humanism. "Unitarianism," he asserted, "offered opportunity for the enunciation of Humanism by virtue of its underlying spirit of spiritual freedom, by its insistence upon intellectual integrity rather than intellectual uniformity, by its offer of religious fellowship to every one of moral purpose without regard to his theological beliefs. But this is not the important thing. The real reason why Unitarianism was the natural soil for the growth of Humanism is the fact that Unitarianism was a revolt against orthodox Christianity in the interest of the

worth and dignity of human nature and the sanctity of human life."<sup>27</sup> About one-fifth of the Unitarian Churches in the United States are acknowledgedly Humanist.

The Universalist Church, an American and Canadian denomination somewhat smaller than the Unitarian, also has an influential Humanist wing. The Universalists became active in the latter part of the eighteenth century and represented a revolt of the heart against certain Christian dogmas such as that of eternal punishment. They take their name from their belief in universal salvation, the doctrine that God "will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness."

In the complex history of the Christian religion there have been still other developments that have encouraged a Humanist attitude. Thus, insofar as the Protestant revolt led to a stress on good works and moral achievement rather than on ritual performance and priestly magic for the attainment of supernatural salvation, it led in a Humanist direction. So also did those tendencies within the Protestant Church which looked to a religion based upon reason instead of revelation. We can take as the prime example here the religion of Deism, which found wide acceptance in Western Europe and America during the eighteenth century.

The viewpoint of Deism was essentially that God created the universe at the beginning of things and then, retiring to the comfortable status of Deity Emeritus, left the great world-machine to work out its own self-evolution according to natural law. This form of religious rationalism placed miracles and prophecy in the class of



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mere superstition; and further undermined revealed religion by stimulating objective and scholarly criticism of the Scriptures. Deism retained the belief in a future life with appropriate rewards and punishments. The deist position in general strengthened the secular, Humanist trends of the modern era, since it implied that men should depend on their own efforts and intelligence and not feel that they could fall back on a Divine Being who would do the job for them or rescue them in an emergency.

Deism reached its peak in the eighteenth century when many of the most eminent intellects on either side of the Atlantic came to support this religion. They included Sir Isaac Newton in England, the irrepressible Voltaire in France, G. E. Lessing in Germany, and Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine in America. Jefferson, who suffered every sort of calumny and slander for his liberalism in religion, wrote: "Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of God; because if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear."<sup>28</sup> Paine's widely circulated book *The Age of Reason* did much to popularize the deist view. A number of the lesser lights of the American Revolution were also Deists. And there is no doubt that George Washington, a rather indifferent member of the Episcopal Church, and John Adams, second President of the United States and sympathetic to Unitarianism, were strongly influenced by Deism, both through the medium of their colleagues and as a result of the general intellectual atmosphere.

Deism in the United States, however, was soon on the wane. Professor Harold A. Larrabee reveals why: "So sharp and so general was the American reaction to the French Revolution and its aftermath, turning public sentiment away in horror from all forms of unbelief toward a re-energized Protestantism, that it virtually closed the national mind for the greater part of the nineteenth century to all philosophies except religious versions of Realism and Idealism. So violent was the counter-attack on Deism that it left no tenable middle ground between evangelical fervor and odious infidelity."<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the course of Christianity, and more particularly subsequent to the Reformation, certain individuals and groups have concentrated on humanitarianism and the Social Gospel rather than on the hope of immortality and the abstract disputes of theology. Typical of this attitude have been the Quakers, or Society of Friends, first organized in Britain by George Fox in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Quakers, like the Unitarians, repudiated the doctrine of the Trinity and religious formalism, advocating *individual* divine guidance through the "inner light." They were philanthropic in spirit and early took an advanced position on many questions, being pioneers for the abolition of slavery, the protection of backward races such as the American Indian, and the improvement of prison conditions. From the start they were uncompromising opponents of militarism and war. They were the first Christian denomination to give women equal rights with men in church organization. And to demonstrate in their daily conduct

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their sympathy with the poor and their disapproval of luxury, the Quakers dressed simply, spoke simply and lived simply.

Most famous of all Quakers was William Penn, founder of the colony of Pennsylvania as a refuge from religious persecution. He was a militant advocate of Quaker beliefs in England at a time when it was extremely unpopular and indeed illegal to support the Friends publicly. Penn repeatedly suffered imprisonment, including nearly nine months in the Tower of London, rather than compromise on his views. Today the main stronghold of the Quakers is in the United States, where the liberal or Hicksite wing of this sect makes the closest approach to Humanism.

Another religious movement primarily concerned with social reform was that of Christian Socialism, which got under way in the British Isles in the middle of the nineteenth century. At first much influenced by Thomas Carlyle, Christian Socialism found its most effective leaders in Frederick Denison Maurice, a forward-looking Anglican, and Charles Kingsley, chiefly remembered today for his novels *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia*. Writing under the assumed name of Parson Lot, Kingsley told his readers in 1848: "We have used the Bible as if it were a mere special constable's handbook — an opium-dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they were being overloaded — a mere book to keep the poor in order\* . . .

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\* Compare Karl Marx's statement, first published in 1844 in his essay, *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*: "Religion is the sigh of the hard-pressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people." It seems improbable that Kingsley took over the opium analogy from Marx.

We have told you that the Bible preached to you patience while we have not told you that it promised you freedom. We have told you that the Bible preached the rights of property and the duties of labor, when (God knows!) for once that it does that, it preaches ten times over the *duties of property* and the *rights of labor*.<sup>30</sup>

Christian Socialism, taking its chief inspiration from a radical interpretation of the Bible, soon expanded into numerous other countries. In the United States it has had capable representatives such as the late Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist; Harry F. Ward, a Methodist and former head of the American Civil Liberties Union; and John C. Bennett, a Congregationalist and Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Union Theological Seminary.

At the present time it is safe to say that each of the main denominations of Protestantism, as well as the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, contains a considerable number of persons whose greatest interest, regardless of the theology that they formally profess, is in the alleviation of human suffering and the extension of human happiness upon this earth. We can make the same generalization about non-Christian religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Mohammedanism and so on. Philosophic Humanists, while continuing to disagree with supernaturalism in whatever guise it appears, welcome as allies on specific economic, social and ethical issues all supernaturalists who sincerely agree with them on such issues. And Humanists would like to have reciprocal treatment.

The philosophy of Humanism is well aware that the

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various supernatural religions, as systems of thought and as institutionalized in the churches, have on the whole acted as a conservative force to preserve the existing order in social and economic affairs. Yet in certain countries at certain times supernatural religion has played a progressive role. And individual members of different sects have again and again shown magnificent courage and idealism in the service of humanity. In the history of the West the innumerable martyrs for freedom of conscience and religion have made a major contribution to the long uphill struggle for democratic rights and civil liberties.

Above all, traditional religion has offered to men an organizing principle of existence, however unsound that principle has been, and a compelling interest to work for beyond their petty personal desires. At its best it has given to them the opportunity of losing themselves in something greater than any individual and of finding themselves thereby in consecration to an ideal. This historic function of religion any present philosophy worthy of the name must fulfil.

Even the most enthusiastic supporters of religion, however, must admit that so far it has signally failed to bring about unity among mankind. No realistic observer today believes that any extant religion has such powers of conversion that it can succeed in achieving religious accord among the different nations and peoples of the globe. Some Western theologians still claim that the world can establish peace and international harmony only under the banner of Christianity. Actually there is scarcely the slightest chance of reconciliation even among the numer-

ous Protestant sects, let alone between them and the Catholic Church, between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, or between Christianity as a whole and the other great faiths.

Nor is there much hope of lasting concord among those non-Christian faiths. In the East as recently as 1947 the two chief religions of India, the Hindu and the Moslem, with a long history of hostility and violence towards each other, were so fundamentally at variance that their adherents felt obliged to divide the country politically into two separate and independent states. During the first stages of this process bitterness was so intense that Hindus and Moslems in areas where the population was mixed rioted and killed off one another in appalling numbers.

The traditional religions make such absolute and unyielding claims for the truth of their respective revelations that substantial agreement between them in regard to theology seems out of the question. What President Jefferson wrote more than a hundred years ago is still pertinent: "On the dogmas of religion as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind."<sup>31</sup>

Precisely where religion throughout history has demonstrated one of its most serious weaknesses, the philosophy of Humanism promises to show particular strength. It is a philosophy that has striking potentialities for unification both within nations and among nations. This is why

Julian Huxley, as head of UNESCO, suggested that the general philosophy of that United Nations agency should be "a scientific world Humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background."<sup>32</sup> Humanism as a philosophy matches the political ideal of One World.

### 3. *The Cultural Background*

Apart from philosophy and religion as such, a great deal in the cultural life of the West has been characterized by a distinctly Humanist spirit. This was eminently true of the supreme flowering of Greek genius, centering in Athens, that took place during the Golden or Periclean Age of the fifth century B.C. The dominant loyalty of this age was devotion to the welfare and glory of the city-state. This was a limited type of Humanism, to be sure, but was genuine Humanism in the sense of setting up human accomplishment in this world as the chief end of man.

Allegiance to the city is a constant theme throughout Greek philosophy and literature. The city-state is the political unit which Plato and Aristotle have in mind throughout their work. The brilliant Greek dramatists, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes, continually discuss in their plays the city patriotism of the Greeks. The full nature of this deep feeling for the city is perhaps best expressed in the famous Funeral Oration of Pericles, greatest of Greek statesmen, as handed down to posterity by the pen of the historian, Thucydides. This speech was made in 431 B.C. over the Athenians who fell during the first year of the Peloponnesian War. Pericles

as head of the Athenian State eulogizes the greatness of his city in both peace and war.

"Our constitution," he declares, "is named a democracy, because it is in the hands not of a few but of the many. Our laws secure equal justice for all in their private disputes, and our public opinion welcomes and honors talent in every branch of achievement, not for any sectional reason, but on grounds of excellence alone. . . . We are lovers of beauty without extravagance, and lovers of wisdom without unmanliness. Wealth to us is not mere material for vain glory but an opportunity for achievement. . . . In a word I claim that our city as a whole is an education to Greece, and that her members yield to none, man by man, for independence of spirit, many-sidedness of attainment, and complete self-reliance in limbs and brain. . . . Great indeed are the symbols and witnesses of our supremacy, at which posterity, as all mankind today, will be astonished."<sup>33</sup>

No single document that has survived the ravages of time sums up more succinctly and accurately than does Pericles' address the highest Athenian ideals of his period. And it is significant that Pericles neither mentions the name of a single god nor alludes to a future existence for the Athenian dead. He is clear that the lustre they have achieved is a this-worldly, a humanistic one. They sacrificed themselves "to the commonwealth and received, each for his own memory, praise that will never die, and with it the grandest of all sepulchres, not that in which their mortal bones are laid, but a home in the minds of men, where their glory remains fresh to stir to speech or



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action as the occasion comes by. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men; and their story is not graven only on stone over their native earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives."<sup>34</sup>

Actually, though certain cults of ancient Greece promised a worth-while personal immortality to men, Greek religion in general, with its gloomy Hades, was similar to that of the ancient Hebrews in conceiving of the after-life as a sad and forbidding place to which rational beings could hardly look forward. The Olympian religion of the Athenians was pagan, poetic and polytheistic; and laid much stress on the proper rites and sacrifices required by the numerous and lively gods and goddesses of the ancient pantheon. "Nevertheless the devotion and worship given to these gods was paid to them as symbols of the glory and the power of the city-state, rather than as deities."<sup>35</sup> Undoubtedly the better educated and more sophisticated among the Greeks, like Pericles himself, did not take the existence of the Olympian gods too seriously and well knew that they were mere personifications of natural forces and human powers, artistic allegories and pleasing metaphors delightful to the imagination.

All the same it was not healthy in Athenian civilization to deny directly the existence of the traditional gods. The conservatives were convinced that many social values were bound up with the old beliefs and that their negation constituted a dangerous challenge to the very principle of authority in government. Socrates was executed and Protagoras exiled because they so vigorously ques-

tioned the *status quo* in ideas. Anaxagoras, another noted Greek philosopher of the fifth century B.C. and a personal friend of Pericles, was found guilty of impiety and condemned to death after he had fled from Athens. In his investigations of the heavenly bodies Anaxagoras advanced a number of hypotheses confirmed some two thousand years later by modern science, but he unfortunately ran afoul of an Athenian law forbidding the study of astronomy. The major crime for which he was convicted was his assertion that the sun was "a mass of red-hot metal . . . larger than the Peloponnesus," instead of a deity as tradition taught. It is a commentary replete with implications that Greek civilization at its height, in many ways democratic despite its slave base, should have prevented free inquiry that seemed to conflict with religion and should have persecuted some of its profoundest minds.

The Humanist viewpoint permeated much of Greek culture during the Periclean Age. As Gilbert Murray has said: "The idea of service to the community was more deeply rooted in the Greeks than in us. And as soon as they began to reflect about literature at all — which they did very early — the main question they asked about each writer was always along these lines: 'Does he help to make better men?' 'Does he make life a better thing?'"<sup>86</sup>

In his play *Antigone* Sophocles writes:

"Many are the wonders of the world  
And none so wonderful as Man."

Then he goes on to describe the extraordinary capacities of men, such as their "wind-swift thought," and their amazing inventions "beyond all dream." And he con-

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cludes, in a vein altogether relevant to our atomic era, that the important thing is not man's power as such, but whether it is used for good or for evil. Closest, however, of the great Greek writers to being a complete Humanist was the scintillating Euripides, the Voltaire of the ancient world. Euripides, sceptical and agnostic, satirized Athenian society and religion throughout his dramas, though he covered his tracks and saved his skin by inserting pious lines now and then.

Religious scepticism combined with official obeisance to the gods was also a feature of Roman culture. In the first century B.C. the great Roman orator, Cicero, showed an absolute disbelief in all the accepted practices of divination, but thought they should be kept "on account of popular opinion and of their great public utility." Julius Caesar avowed his unbelief in immortality and was contemptuous of the supernaturalist rituals and sacrifices that he carried out for the sake of political expediency. Ovid and Horace, both outstanding writers of this period, had no faith in personal survival after death. Nor did Pliny the Elder. The supreme lyric poet of Rome, Catullus, whose love poems are among the most moving in all literature, was a sort of ancient Omar Khayyám in his general attitude of irrepressible pleasure-seeking in this vale of delight. Though the poet Terence was no Humanist, he gave expression to a famous Humanist sentiment that is ever appropriate: "I am a man, and nothing that concerns a man do I deem a matter of indifference to me."

Subsequent to the emergence of Greek Humanism, the

next notable Humanist period did not come until the European Renaissance of the fifteenth century A.D. I discussed earlier the significance of the Renaissance for the Humanist movement.\* The essential point to remember is that the Renaissance Humanists insisted, in contra-distinction to the prevailing Christian tradition, that men possess intrinsic ethical and intellectual worth instead of being morally depraved and mentally impotent; and that human individuals, no matter what may be in store for them beyond the grave, should look upon this-earthly enjoyment as a natural and wholesome part of the good life. It was Erasmus himself, author, scholar and generally acknowledged as the most representative Humanist of all, who ended his characteristic book, *The Praise of Folly*, with the lines:

“ . . . Drink deep, live long, be jolly,  
Ye illustrious votaries of folly.”

At times Renaissance Humanism's revulsion against the repressive other-worldliness that had held human nature in bondage for so many centuries turned into almost pure paganism.

On the continent the Humanist spirit of life — ardent and overflowing in beauty, pleasure and action — received its most magnificent rendering in the work of the supreme masters of Renaissance art. The Italian painters, Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo, Titian and Tintoretto, though they utilized Christian mythology to a large degree, at one and the same time depicted in sublimest

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\* See pp. 29-31.

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color and form the glories of existence in the here and now. Farther north the Rabelaisian Rubens crammed into his sprawling canvasses all the gusto of life in Flanders; while the restrained yet vital Rembrandt, with his balanced light and shade, gave a sense of the infinite power and possibilities of the human personality. In Elizabethan England it was the poets who most completely and convincingly expressed the Humanist attitude. And there William Shakespeare, in the endless profusion of his dramatic genius, achieved heights never transcended by anyone writing in the English language.

Shakespeare himself indicated little interest in or support of religious supernaturalism. As Santayana points out in his penetrating essay, "The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare," England's greatest poet, while making a few allusions to the Christian faith in order to round out his characters, "chose to leave his heroes and himself in the presence of life and of death with no other philosophy than that which the profane world can suggest and understand,"<sup>37</sup> namely a species of Humanism. Shakespeare's mind was on men and women living out their diverse lives in diverse types of society; he dwelt upon the human foreground without much attention to the cosmic background. And in *Hamlet* Shakespeare gives one of the most memorable of Humanist perorations: "What a piece of work is Man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!"<sup>38</sup>

Another profound Humanist upsurge took place as part of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment which I have already mentioned in connection with the philosophy of Materialism.\* Besides the materialist philosophers of that time, the most influential intellect was that of the bold, witty, all-encompassing Voltaire. Voltaire can be taken as typical of Humanism's reliance on reason and science, of its faith in the educability of man and its determination to do away with the evils that afflict the human race. This burning interest in the welfare of humanity was long known as *humanitarianism*, though this word has now come to have the rather limited meaning of preventing the more immediate and obvious kinds of physical suffering through philanthropic and reform measures.

Voltaire was in the forefront of the fight against the Catholic Church and in fact author of the stirring anti-clerical battlecry, "Ecrasez l'infame!" ("Crush the infamous thing!"). But he was not so radical in philosophy as his materialist colleagues and is on record as stating that "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him." As we have seen, in religion Voltaire supported Deism and helped to spread its reputation as an "anti-clerical theism."

He and his fellow French Encyclopedists eloquently voiced those ideals of international peace and cosmopolitanism, of human freedom and democracy, that are so integral to the Humanist outlook. Voltaire's conception of the basic spirit behind free speech and civil liberties has

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\* See pp. 54-55.

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been perfectly paraphrased in the familiar words often directly attributed to him: "I wholly disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it." Voltaire and his co-workers had an invincible belief in the possibility, and indeed probability, of unceasing social progress. In truth, the modern idea of progress came to maturity during this Age of Reason in France.

That idea, so commonplace in our own times, was quite original in those. As Professor Randall tells us: "It is difficult for us to realize how recent a thing is this faith in human progress. The ancient world seems to have had no conception of it; Greeks and Romans looked back rather to a Golden Age from which man had degenerated. The Middle Ages, of course, could brook no such thought. The Renaissance, which actually accomplished so much, could not imagine that man could ever rise again to the level of glorious antiquity; its thoughts were all on the past. Only with the growth of science in the seventeenth century could men dare to cherish such an overweening ambition."<sup>39</sup>

Still another contributor to the French Encyclopedia who should not be overlooked was the fiery Jean Jacques Rousseau. He opposed a sloppy religion of feeling to the Age of Reason, so that Voltaire wrote that he resembled a philosopher "as a monkey resembles a man." Yet even this anti-intellectual Rousseau was humanistic in the sense of passionately advocating a better life for humanity and a more democratic organization of society. "Man is born free and everywhere he is in irons!" he cried. Rousseau was also one of the first modern writers who

gave conscious expression to that appreciation of Nature as a thing of beauty which ought to be a part of any fully rounded philosophy. And while he was full of romantic exaggerations, he always serves as a vivid reminder that Humanism must make room for human emotion, especially feelings of social sympathy, as well as for reason.

In England of the eighteenth century there were a few literary tendencies of a Humanist flavor, with Alexander Pope composing, in his *Essay on Man*, the celebrated couplet:

“Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is man.”

At the beginning of the nineteenth century William Blake, no Humanist and a pronounced mystic in both his art and poetry, nonetheless produced a stanza, in his *Milton*, that has been an inspiration for generations of British Humanists:

“I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England’s green and pleasant land.”

It was only a little later that the youthful genius of Percy Bysshe Shelley startled the literary and academic world of England. Expelled from Oxford University in 1811 at the age of eighteen for his essay on “The Necessity of Atheism,” Shelley shortly afterwards extended and refined its theme in the spirited though immature *Queen Mab*, a long poem denouncing supernaturalism and the evils of Christianity. The British authorities refused to grant Shelley the usual copyright on this work, on the



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ground that no author deserved copyright protection for a book advocating clearly pernicious opinions. In *Queen Mab* there are already suggestions of Shelley's more mature belief in the immanent World Spirit of Pantheism.

Of far greater poetic and intellectual merit is Shelley's drama *Prometheus Unbound*, in which he recounts how Prometheus, representing the human mind and will, gives over his powers to the god Jupiter, who thereupon enchains Prometheus and enslaves the race of man. But Jupiter is finally overthrown, with the result that both Prometheus and man become free. The symbolic meaning of this poem is that the anthropomorphic God of theology is a brain-spun creation of the human imagination and that man remains in thrall to this non-existent being until he takes his destiny into his own hands, winning salvation by bringing about an earthly millennium in place of the Christian heaven.

In the closing stanza of *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley, in a final summing up of the spirit of Prometheus himself, wrought one of the most moving passages of militant Humanism in all poetry:

“To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

In Germany it was Goethe, whose long career lasted well into the nineteenth century, who gave unrivalled expression to the Humanist love of earthy, whole-hearted, many-sided life. His poetic drama *Faust*, sometimes called the "divine comedy" of modern Humanism, constitutes a re-affirmation of the liberating spirit of the original Renaissance. Like Shelley, Goethe retained a vague pantheistic belief.

During this same period German music took a marked turn toward Humanist themes. Beethoven is noteworthy here with his Third Symphony, the "Eroica," celebrating the memory of a great man; his Fifth Symphony, portraying the triumph of mankind over fate; and his Ninth Symphony, assertive of the brotherhood of man and attaining its climax in a stirring setting to music of the poet Schiller's "Ode to Joy." There is no doubt that Beethoven himself was a real democrat at a time when it was not easy to be one. Wagner, while by no means consistent in his thought, told in "The Ring of the Niebelung" the story of disintegrating godhood and humanity supplanting it. In "The Twilight of the Gods," the final opera of the tetralogy, this theme reaches its culmination as Valhalla crashes down in flames. Wagner's saga of the legendary Norse gods can also be interpreted as showing the dangers and evils of uncontrolled power being concentrated in the hands of a few.

In the later nineteenth century in England the Humanist literary tradition was carried on by such authors as George Eliot (Marian Evans), Edward Fitzgerald, William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Eliot,

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who is best known for her novels, translated two Humanist classics from the German, *The Essence of Christianity* by Ludwig Feuerbach and *The Life of Jesus* by David F. Strauss. In her superb poem, *The Choir Invisible*, she gives praise to the immortality of influence in place of personal survival beyond the tomb. Thus she speaks

“Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence: live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end with self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man’s search  
To vaster issues. . . .”

Fitzgerald was a contemporary of George Eliot and rendered into English quatrains the philosophic reflections of Omar Khayyám, son of a Persian tentmaker, and brilliant scientist and freethinker of the eleventh century. The result was a poetic masterpiece that has become a world classic, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, which Fitzgerald had to print himself since at first no publisher dared touch it. *The Rubáiyát* scoffs at the idea of an after-existence and acclaims the virtues of delighting in life while we may:

┌“Oh, threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!  
One thing at least is certain — *This* Life flies;  
One thing is certain and the rest is lies;  
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.”

This poem is the modern Bible of hedonists who devote themselves primarily to personal pleasure in this world,

and beautifully expresses the mood of gay and light-hearted living, free from supernaturalist restraints.

In his *News from Nowhere* William Morris, reacting against the evils and ugliness of the Industrial Revolution, sketched a Humanist Utopia in terms of a simple and secularized village economy in which crowded cities and grimy factories are both eliminated and where regular work merges with applied art and the creation of beauty. Swinburne, the finest English lyric poet of the Victorian Age, did his mature work after the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and absorbed into his thought the naturalistic implications of the revolutionary new biology. In his poem, *The Garden of Proserpine*, Swinburne gives thanks that individual lives come to an end with "the sleep eternal in an eternal night." His tenuous, re-defined "God" is nothing more than the spiritual aspirations of humanity glimpsed as a whole. And his humanistic spirit asserts itself in the concluding line of his passionate *Hymn to Man*: "Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things."

George Meredith, another leading Victorian author, revealed a Humanist bent in his poetry, while the agnostically inclined Matthew Arnold vigorously attacked religious superstition and upheld the idea that Jesus was not God but a great teacher and oracle of "sweet reasonableness." One of the supreme English novelists, Thomas Hardy, some of whose best work appeared in the twentieth century, leaned toward a pessimistic Humanism and believed that humanity is doomed to permanent frustration and tragedy. Hardy's philosophy brings out the

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fact that it is possible to relinquish entirely Christian supernaturalism and at the same time retain an attitude of defeatism toward human hopes of happiness and progress on this earth. Also disposed to a sombre and disillusioned Humanism was A. E. Housman, author of the magnificent volume of poems, *A Shropshire Lad*.

A twentieth-century writer who stood for the reasoned optimism that usually accompanies the Humanist viewpoint was the late H. G. Wells. While Wells became rather pessimistic in the last few years of his life, partly under the impact of the Second World War, he strenuously championed during most of his career all of the main Humanist ethical and social goals. In his program for the emancipation of mankind he accented the need for a radically reformed educational system, for the spread of scientific thinking and for a world economy and world state on a cooperative basis. Another famous English literary figure, the late John Galsworthy, was of a Humanist turn of mind and asserted: "Humanism is the creed of those who believe that in the circle of enwrapping mystery, men's fates are in their own hands — a faith that for modern man is becoming the only possible faith."<sup>40</sup>

Turning to the continent once more, we find that French literature after the middle of the nineteenth century was dominantly rationalistic and humanistic in its trend. Here the distinguished names of Gustav Flaubert, Emile Zola, Alphonse Daudet and Guy de Maupassant stand out preeminently. Ernest Renan's illuminating book, *The Life of Jesus*, translated into many languages, gave a Humanist interpretation of Christ as "an

incomparable man" and created an international sensation. Anatole France, who died in 1924 at the age of eighty, was perhaps the greatest and most thorough-going French Humanist of the past hundred years. A spiritual son of Voltaire, his trenchant novels satirizing the old superstitions provoked the ire of entrenched and institutionalized bigotry throughout Europe. In Scandinavia the dramatist Henrik Ibsen wrote in a pronounced Humanist vein in his later work, while in Russia the writers Ivan Turgenev and Maxim Gorky showed distinct Humanist leanings in their novels. Gorky was a radical in politics and supported the new Soviet regime during the last part of his life.

In the world of art the French, again, were leaders in the direction of Humanism. The painter, Eugene Delacroix, participated actively in the secular and democratic tendencies of the age. He welcomed the Revolution of 1830 and shortly thereafter exhibited his most famous picture, "Liberty Leading the People to the Barricades," now in the Louvre. The sculptor, Auguste Rodin, created some of the most stirring of modern statuary, giving impassioned, if somewhat theatrical, expression to the radiant actualities of life on earth. The composer, Claude Debussy, rejected the supernaturalist creeds and insisted upon a purely secular funeral. His exquisite symphonic poems, such as "The Sea," "Clouds" and "The Afternoon of a Faun," reflected varying moods of Nature and introduced a delicate and subtle originality into the portrayal of natural beauty in musical themes.

In America the most effective single voice in the second

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half of the nineteenth century in opposition to supernaturalist myths was that of Robert G. Ingersoll. Ingersoll was one of the most alert thinkers and persuasive orators in the history of the United States. A pillar of the Republican Party, he lectured far and wide throughout the country for three decades in his campaign against religious intolerance and credulity. Ingersoll's Humanist creed was:

“Justice is the only worship.  
Love is the only priest.  
Ignorance is the only slavery.  
Happiness is the only good.  
The time to be happy is now,  
The place to be happy is here,  
The way to be happy is to make others so.  
Wisdom is the science of happiness.”<sup>41</sup>

In academic circles Andrew D. White's scholarly study, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, proved of signal service to the documentation of Humanism by showing that the theologians had fought practically every forward step in scientific investigation during the past nineteen hundred years, much to the detriment of religion as well as of science. In the realm of social thought Edward Bellamy produced the most influential of American visions of Utopia in his amazingly popular novel, *Looking Backward*. Bellamy vividly portrayed an ideal socialist commonwealth for the United States, with public ownership of the main means of production and distribution recognized as in the true in-

terests of all classes. Another severe critic of the prevailing economic system was Lester F. Ward, founder of American sociology. Ward worked out an original and rational cosmic philosophy that clearly places him in the ranks of Humanism. He energetically and effectively attacked supernaturalism as an obstacle to science and progress, at one time editing an anti-religious journal called the *Iconoclast*.

As for outstanding literary figures in America with a Humanist outlook, there have been far fewer of them than in Europe. Henry David Thoreau, though retaining his belief in a Creator, rebelled against some of the cardinal supernaturalist dogmas, questioning that it is the chief end of man "to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." He complained that men so rarely express "a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life"; and commented on the idea of immortality with the observation, "One world at a time." Thoreau was also a militant fighter against slavery and for democracy. But his most valuable contribution to the Humanist philosophy came in his detailed descriptive writing on the beauties of external Nature, especially in *Walden or Life in the Woods*, the classic prose work in this field.

Contemporary with Thoreau was Walt Whitman, whose intimate and large-visioned appreciations of Nature had a singular quality. Humanists, however, remember Whitman particularly for his eloquent and sustained panegyric to the democratic ideal and consider him perhaps the greatest poet of democracy. He was humanistic, too, in his glorification of the infinite enjoyments possible



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in human experience; and was, to use one of his own expressions, a "caresser of life wherever flowing." For him merely to be alive and healthy amounted to a kind of ecstasy: "Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good fortune." Although by no means free of supernaturalist illusions, Whitman sang of the robust pleasures of the whole man, body and soul, and heartily disbelieved in all asceticisms.

Without undertaking an inclusive compilation, we can take as further representative of the Humanist viewpoint in America the realistic novelists Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis and John Steinbeck; and the poets Arthur Davison Ficke, Archibald MacLeish, Edwin Markham and Carl Sandburg. In his poems *Brotherhood* and *Earth Is Enough* Markham puts into simple and unsophisticated language the key concepts of Humanism. Thus the latter poem starts:

"We men of Earth have here the stuff  
Of Paradise — we have enough!  
We need no other stones to build  
The Temple of the Unfulfilled —  
No other ivory for the doors —  
No other marble for the floors —  
No other cedar for the beam  
And dome of man's immortal dream."

In my survey of the Humanist tradition I have not attempted to give an account of the rise of modern science or the major role that philosophers have played in its increasing progress and prestige. Scientific developments,

however, have been of enormous effect in weakening attitudes of other-worldliness and in furthering the Humanist philosophy. In the first place, scientific discoveries and the scientific temper have done much to revise, in the direction of Humanism, traditional ideas and methods in religion and philosophy; though usually it has not been the scientists themselves who have worked out the deeper implications of the new findings in astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology and other fields.

In the second place, applied science in its development of the machine and modern technology has opened up possibilities of this-earthly abundance and human advancement that were hardly dreamt of before. In the economic sphere the new machine techniques led directly to the far-reaching Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The accompanying growth of the factory system and the working class, together with the tremendous increase in the production of goods, has resulted in an almost universal demand for a higher standard of living for the masses of the people. This altogether Humanist objective the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt called "the dominating feeling of our age."

I have obviously not tried to cover all those manifold events of a political and social character that have had significance for the flowering of the Humanist spirit. I shall merely mention here the three great political revolutions of modern times: the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Each one of these major upheavals entailed

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an immense amount of suffering and violence, and each one fell short of its stated aims in many particulars. But each of them wrought enormous gains for the peoples immediately concerned, rendered a lasting impetus to the cause of human freedom and opened up new pathways to the eventual achievement of a truly Humanist world.

As I study the historic roots of Humanism, it becomes increasingly clear that the social and political penalties following upon the open espousal of a Humanist philosophy have in general been very great and have prevented many enlightened persons in every era from speaking out with entire frankness. This is one reason for the constant and confusing redefinition of religious terms like *God* and *immortality*. Retention of at least these *words* in a man's vocabulary has been necessary during certain periods to preserve his life or prevent his imprisonment. Equivocation in philosophy and religion has deep social roots. And centuries-old habits of compromise or silence on the more basic issues in these fields illustrate once more Karl Marx's remark that "The legacy of the dead generations weighs like an alp on the brains of the living."<sup>42</sup>

Even in a modern democratic community like that of the United States, "where legal penalties do not attach to an avowal of serious heresy, there inheres in the mere menace of social ostracism a power sufficient to coerce the outward life of public and professional men of all grades."<sup>43</sup> There is considerable truth in the saying attributed to the first Earl of Shaftesbury and later popularized by Benjamin Disraeli: "All wise men have the same religion, but wise men never tell." However, the

worldly discretion of the sophisticated concerning other-worldly affairs has often been due, not so much to personal fear as to belief in the Macchiavellian myth that religious superstition is a needful restraint upon the masses of the people.

Our survey also indicates the importance of literary men and non-technical philosophers in the history of philosophy. Professional philosophers are necessarily intellectuals, in fact college or university teachers in nine cases out of ten; and they tend to take a somewhat intellectualistic attitude toward the human scene. Many of them have been so busy thinking that they have shut themselves off from a well-rounded existence. We need the poets and the writers to make philosophy full-blooded, to take it out of the study and into the world. We need Shakespeare, Goethe, Shelley, Swinburne, Sandburg and the rest to remind us that life can be a wonder and a wild desire, an adventure and a thing of joy forever.

In this chapter I have treated only the highlights of the great Humanist tradition in philosophy, religion and culture, calling attention to the fact that some of the most illustrious minds of the past have been in essence Humanist. Modern Humanism is proud of this long tradition that gives to it an impressive continuity reaching back over the ages and coming down from ancient Greece and Rome, through the European Renaissance, through the French Enlightenment, through the flowering of nineteenth-century Western culture to the eminent thinkers of our time. Present-day Humanism offers its philosophy to the world, not with any pretensions of having attained in-

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tellectual finality, yet with the hope and belief that it will prove useful to the peoples of the earth in their march onward and upward.

## CHAPTER III    THIS LIFE IS ALL AND ENOUGH

### 1. *The Unity of Body and Personality*

For Humanism, as for most philosophies, the most important and far-reaching problem connected with the nature and destiny of man is what sort of relationship exists between the physical body and the personality, which includes the mind in its every aspect. Is the relation between body and personality so close and fundamental that they constitute an indissoluble unity (the monistic theory); or is it so loose and unessential that the personality can be considered a separable and independent entity which is able in the final analysis to function without the body (the dualistic theory)? Are men, in short, fundamentally a one-ness or a two-ness? Is the human self built and nurtured and maintained only on the basis of living flesh and blood or can it somehow continue its existence, like the captain of a ship that is sunk, after the dissolution of its life partnership with the bodily organism?

Involved in this issue to a considerable extent are problems of knowledge, of ethics, of education and of individual freedom. Most directly involved of all for philosophy and religion is the question of death and of personal immortality. If the dualistic theory or psychology is

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true, as the traditional religions of the world hold, then a future life is probable or at least possible. If, on the other hand, the monistic theory or psychology is true, as Naturalism, Materialism and Humanism claim, then there is no possibility that the human consciousness, with its memory and awareness of self-identity intact, can survive the shock and disintegration of death. According to this view, the body and personality live together; they grow together; and they die together.

The issue of mortality versus immortality is crucial in the argument of Humanism against supernaturalism. For if men realize that their careers are limited to this world, that this earthly existence is all that they will ever have, then they are already more than half-way on the path toward becoming functioning Humanists, no matter what their general attitude toward the universe and no matter what they think about a Deity. In my opinion the history of philosophy and religion demonstrates that in the West, at least, the idea of immortality has on the whole played a more important part than the idea of God. William James asserts unqualifiedly that "the popular touchstone for all philosophies is the question, 'What is their bearing on a future life?'"<sup>44</sup> If this is true, then James is also correct in observing that for most men God has been primarily the guarantor of survival beyond the grave.

Christianity in particular, with its central emphasis on the resurrection and eternal life, came into being first and foremost as a death-conquering religion. And in modern times the priority of immortality in the Christian faith has become ever more insistent, with the very existence of

God being more and more frequently deduced from the alleged perseverance of the human personality after death. A brilliant student of religious psychology, Professor James B. Pratt, penetrates to the heart of the situation when he writes: "As the belief in miracles and special answers to prayer and in the interference of the supernatural within the natural has gradually disappeared, almost the only *pragmatic* value of the supernatural left to religion is the belief in a personal future life."<sup>45</sup>

Fraught with the greatest significance, then, is the Humanist position affirming the truth of the monistic or naturalistic psychology, with its sweeping implications regarding the idea of immortality. And I believe that the facts of science offer overwhelming evidence in support of the Humanist thesis of the inseparable coexistence of body and personality.

To begin with, biology has conclusively shown that man and all other forms of life were the result, not of a supernatural act of creation by God, but of an infinitely long process of evolution stretching over at least three or four hundred million years. In that gradual evolutionary advance which started with the lowly amoeba and those even simpler things marking the transition from inanimate matter to life, body was prior and basic. With its increasing complexity, there came about an accompanying development and integration of animal behavior and control, culminating in the species man and in the phenomenon called mind. Mind, in short, appeared at the present apex of the evolutionary process and not at the beginning.

The human body itself is an organism of the most



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prodigious intricacy, its multitudinous parts adjusted to one another to the last degree of nicety and its billions upon billions of cells normally working together in all but perfect harmony. Specifically it is the relatively greater complexity of the brain in man, and particularly of the cerebral cortex, that has bestowed on him the incomparable power of thought and raised him so immeasurably above all other creatures of the earth. We can be certain that if ever a species more advanced than ourselves emerges upon this planet, it will possess a brain, and therefore a mind, more highly developed than that of contemporary man.

Just as in the evolution of species, mind and personality appear when bodily organization has reached a certain stage, so it is in the history of every normal human being, from conception to the prime of life. Neither the embryo nor the newborn infant possess the distinguishing features of mind, though their potentialities for eventual mental development are of course already present. The laws of heredity, with the hundreds of thousands of genes from each parent determining the inherent mental and physical characteristics of each individual, show in the first instance the intimate correlation between the physical organism and the self. The laws of sex, with their ever-powerful influence on behavior, character and aptitude, tell the same story. It is obvious that the fundamental differences between the male and female personalities depend primarily upon different bodily organization. Always the general rule is that the kind of personality one has is conditioned to a decisive degree by the kind of body

one has and by the more fundamental changes that take place in that body.

Any father or mother who carefully watches the growth of a child from birth through adolescence to maturity can make a thousand and one commonplace observations that convincingly testify to the progressive unity of body and mind. This correlation of the physical and the psychic continues through adulthood and old age to the last hour of breath. In the words of Lucretius two thousand years ago: "We feel that the understanding is begotten along with the body and grows together with it, and along with it comes to old age. For as children totter with feeble and tender body, so a weak judgment of mind goes with it. Then when their years are ripe and their strength hardened, greater is their sense and increased their force of mind. Afterward, when now the body is shattered by the stern strength of time, and the frame has sunk with its force dulled, then the reason is maimed, the tongue raves, the mind stumbles, all things give way and fail at once."<sup>46</sup>

Of course Lucretius's statement requires qualification. Men can grow very old and remain quite alert and clear in their minds until the very end. However, some slowing down in the mental processes does take place in practically all persons during advanced years; and definite personality changes usually occur beyond middle age if only for the reason that the human organism then no longer possesses the same physical strength and recuperative powers as in the days of youth. Thus as a rule athletic champions do not come from the older generation.

The very process of dying throws additional light on

the relation between body and personality. As at the beginning of an individual's life, during gestation and infancy, the body is controlling, so, too, at the end of life. Just as no personality can enter this world until some body issues, as it were, a passport, so no personality can depart this life until the body gives the word by ceasing all vital functions. Men can be recalled from what is almost equivalent to a state of death, as when they are revived from drowning, suffocation or electric shock, through various types of artificial respiration or of drastic therapy directly involving the heart. The clear implication of these different medical techniques is that personalities, or *souls* in the older phraseology, are very intimately bound up with their this-earthly bodies and that in such situations as I have indicated they come and go according to the expert manipulation of these bodies.

Psychology and its associated sciences give the most conclusive proof of all in support of the oneness of body and personality. Our conscious experience depends on the nervous system with its numberless circuits running through the brain, the spinal cord, the sense organs, and indeed all parts of the body. Our thinking processes are centered in the outer layer of the brain, the cerebral cortex, which consists of well over nine billion nerve cells or neurones. The total number of distinct and different connections, both actual and possible, in this organ is simply staggering and for practical purposes approaches infinity. Along the neuronic pathways of the cortex are laid down those enduring memory patterns which are so absolutely essential for the operation of the mind and the

survival of which, in great measure, is a necessity for personal immortality. It is beyond all comprehension how they could possibly outlast the dissolution of the living brain in which they originated and had their being.

Analysis of different types of mental states, including outright abnormality or insanity, strengthens these conclusions. A severe blow on the head, a fracture of the skull, destruction of the brain tissue by disease, lack of thyroid secretion, diminution of the blood supply to the brain, alteration of its quality or rate of circulation through the use of alcohol or drugs — all of these things impair more or less seriously normal intellectual activity. Backing up this evidence of the close inter-relation between the brain and thought is the scientific correlation of functions such as seeing, hearing and speech coordination with identifiable sections of the cerebral cortex.

Everyday experience and observation reinforce these more technical considerations. Everyone knows what happens when you drink too much, but we turn again to Lucretius for the perfect description: "When the stinging strength of wine has entered into a man, and its heat has spread abroad throughout his veins, why is it that there follows a heaviness in the limbs, his legs are entangled as he staggers, his tongue is sluggish, and his mind heavy, his eyes swim, shouting, sobbing, quarreling grows apace, and then all the other signs of this sort that go along with them; why does this come to pass, except that the mastering might of the wine is wont to confound the soul even within the body? But whenever things can be so confounded and entangled, they testify that, if a cause

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a whit stronger shall have made its way within, they must needs perish, robbed of any further life."<sup>47</sup>

The common processes of sleep and fatigue well illustrate some of the points I have been making. As the body grows tired, the mind grows tired with it. Though it is possible to fight off sleep for no little time, the natural thing is for the whole man as a unit to want and take repose. During slumber a person remains unconscious, except in the sense of occasionally having dreams. Were it not for the substantial and efficacious connecting links that memory provides between the successive days of our lives, we should arise each morning with no consciousness of the past and without the awareness of continuing self-identity so essential to human selfhood. And surely it is legitimate to infer that if a person temporarily loses consciousness in sleep for a third or fourth of every twenty-four hour day, he may at death lose that consciousness permanently.

If one sleeps poorly or perhaps not at all for even a single night, the deleterious effects on the mind and especially on its ability to concentrate become quickly apparent. Bad digestion is likewise only too well-known an enemy of clear and unimpeded thinking; and in fact any sort of ill health may impair intellectual efficiency to some extent or other. Not everything, however, that goes on in the body at large has immediately important consequences for the brain and its powers of thought. This is why people may have serious, long-drawn-out and often fatal diseases, such as cancer or tuberculosis, without their mental faculties being substantially impaired. Cases of this kind

show that while the human organism is a closely integrated system, some parts of it in some ways are relatively independent of other parts.

It is of course undeniable that mental states like fear and anger, optimism and good humor, can and do have far-reaching results on the condition of the physical organism. Good morale can be as important to the functioning of individuals and groups as good food. A physical process such as the knitting of a broken limb is sometimes prevented or delayed by impaired nutrition resulting from anxiety. Lovesickness is a real disease in both men and women. And without accepting all the conclusions of psychoanalysis, we can safely say that the subconscious exercises a profound influence on human behavior and that repressions connected with sex sometimes set up dangerous neuroses that adversely affect an individual's health. These and many other related facts, far from indicating that the mind can become completely independent of the body, point to a connection between the two so intimate and inclusive that it is inconceivable how one could function without the other.

One of the most easily discernible indications of the pervasive unity of personality and body is the way in which the physical exterior of a man reflects his essential being. The gait, the carriage, the voice, the eyes, the passing smile upon the lips, the faint wrinkling of the brow, however easy or difficult to interpret correctly, do mirror the varying mental and emotional characteristics of a person. Just because of this well-known fact, conscious volition often steps in to control facial reactions.

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The English churchman and poet, John Donne, puts our whole point beautifully in describing the animated features of a high-spirited young girl:

“Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought  
That one might almost say her body thought.”<sup>48</sup>

*Her body thought.* Here in a phrase Donne, a good orthodox Christian of the seventeenth century, sums up, without realizing all the implications, a central tenet of the naturalistic psychology. *Human bodies think.* Precisely! And the extraordinary thing, if we wish to talk in superlatives, is that there should be thinking at all, not that a material organism should do that thinking.

Another most important consideration is the great extent to which the personality is moulded by the human environment. All of us are born into a family and into a society. Our parents, our teachers, our friends, our nationality, our language, our economic condition, and many other social factors influence enormously the growth of our characters and minds. Weighty and dramatic evidence here is the recent well-authenticated discovery of two “wolf-children” in India, as recounted in the scholarly study, *Wolf Child and Human Child*, by Dr. Arnold Gesell of the Yale Medical School. Dr. Gesell’s book is based on the diary of the Reverend J. A. L. Singh of Midnapore,<sup>49</sup> who tells how he and his helpers found, in the year 1920, two female human children, one aged about eight and the other about one and a half, in a wolf-den on the edge of the jungle. Several wolves fled at the time of capture, but the mother-wolf stood her ground and

was killed. Evidently this mother-wolf had suckled and cared for the two girl children for a considerable time. The natives of the district, having glimpsed them occasionally in the forest, had come to believe that they were "man-ghosts."

Kamala, the older girl, and Amala, the younger one, had been able to survive by acquiring characteristic wolf habits and adapting themselves as best they could to wolf "culture." Kamala walked and ran on all fours, seized her food by mouth, insisted on nudity, preferred darkness to daylight, and howled at night in a piercing half-animal, half-human wail. She knew no human ways or words. The Reverend Singh put Kamala and Amala into the Orphanage at Midnapore and, with his wife, undertook to train them as normal human beings. Amala, being still a baby, learned more quickly than Kamala, but survived only a year in her new environment. Very slowly the Singhs were able to teach Kamala how to stand upright, how to walk, how to wear clothes, how to talk. In 1924 Kamala had six words in her vocabulary; in 1927, forty-five. Gradually she came to enjoy human association and to lead an essentially human existence, though a retarded one. Unfortunately she died in 1929, at the age of seventeen, nine years after leaving the wolf-cave.

This story cogently illustrates, it seems to me, the point that the personalities of human beings do not enter ready-made into this world, but are the product of culture and circumstances as well as heredity. One of the things that struck me most forcefully about Kamala was that her wolf-life and conditioning prevented her from even learn-



ing to walk upright while she was with the wolves. The significance of this fact for the monistic psychology is well brought out by Dr. Gesell in his analysis of the wolf-children. He reminds us that "the basic framework of the action-system of all vertebrates is posture. Even in man the finer and subtler patterns of behavior are grafted on postural sets and postural attitudes. Kamala had basic ways of squatting, reclining, inspecting, sniffing, listening and of locomotion acquired in the wolf era of her developmental career. These motorsets constituted the core of her action-system and affected the organization of her personality. . . . Even after several years of sojourn with upright human beings, quadrupedal locomotion was resorted to whenever speed was necessary. On two feet she never learned to run at all; on four feet she ran so fast it was hard to overtake her."<sup>50</sup>

In short, even a normal human body does not automatically produce a characteristic human personality, but only when that body is subject to certain environmental and social influences. The remarkable case of Kamala, in conjunction with a multitude of other scientific data, logically leads to the crucial statement that not only do our individual minds depend upon the accumulated intellectual and cultural heritage of the race, but that mind as we know it is in its very origin a social product. For the human mind matures and attains its distinctive powers of abstract thought only through the symbols of speech and language. And speech, since admittedly it is not a native biological function, came into existence only through men associating together and developing — from

elementary movements, grunts and cries — definite, recognizable signs which serve as a medium of communication and which are necessary even in the silent soliloquy of personal reflection when one in effect talks to oneself.

Spoken and written words are not, of course, the only form that inter-human language can take. The pointings and gestures of the deaf and dumb, the dots and dashes of the Morse code, the smoke signals of Indian tribes are all well-established modes of human expression. Whatever means are used, however, for the interchange of thought, ideas always arise as concomitants of a thoroughly material brain in action and are always communicated through some symbol such as a written or spoken word that is also material in quality.

We can add the further point that moral standards, like the categories of mind, originate and evolve in the course of human association. Hence morality, too, is a social product. The notion that a supernatural soul enters the body from on high, already endowed with a pure and beautiful conscience, runs quite counter to the findings of anthropology, psychology and ethical science. It is possible, then, to summarize the entire situation by saying that, in addition to the indissoluble union between body, on the one hand, and mind and personality, on the other, there is also an indissoluble connection between the body-mind-personality, that is, the whole man, and the sustaining and conditioning environment, both human and physical.

As we have seen, language and abstractions are necessary to the operation of the mind; but it is the misuse

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of abstractions, I believe, that is one of the prime causes of confusion regarding the body-mind problem. The terms "mind" and "personality" are abstractions that we use, like "digestion" and "respiration," to designate certain activities of the human being. Unfortunately our language habits make it dangerously easy to separate such abstractions from the original functionings that gave rise to them and then to treat them as if they were somehow independent and self-subsistent.

It is so evident, however, that digestion and respiration are functions, primarily, of the stomach and the lungs that it would at once seem absurd to imagine them as operating without these organs. But since the complete functional dependence of personality and mind on the body and brain is less generally known and accepted, it does not offhand appear so unreasonable to talk of them as if they existed minus their indispensable physical base. Actually it makes no more sense to postulate a special brain-soul in order to account for the activities of the mind than to postulate a special stomach-soul in order to explain the functioning of the stomach or a special lung-soul to explain the phenomenon of breathing. And in this whole discussion it would be most helpful for us to remember that mind is not a separate agent or thing-in-itself, but is a particular type of doing, of activity, on the part of a human being. Thought always signifies thinking; reason is always reasoning.

Certain eminent twentieth-century philosophers, such as the late Henri Bergson, have persisted in adhering to the dualistic psychology; but their theory of a separable

and independent soul involves them in a number of unresolvable dilemmas. It is, for example, impossible either to understand how an immaterial soul can act upon and control a material body or to distinguish between those human characteristics which belong to the immortal soul and to the mortal this-earthly organism. The hypothesis that the brain-body acts as a transmissive apparatus through which the soul manifests itself, as a light shines through a colored glass, also breaks down at numerous points.

The dualistic position becomes especially vulnerable when we bring into play the scientific law of parsimony, which requires that any scientific explanation be based on the fewest possible assumptions that succeed in accounting for all the facts. The dualist assumption of a supernatural soul violates this law because of being unnecessary and superfluous for explaining the emotional profundities and the intellectual powers of men. It is as much out of place as the old-time attribution of invisible little devils or demons to account for insanity and hysteria. The amazing complexity and resources of the human body as a whole, evolved from the lower forms of life through veritable aeons of time, and the infinite intricacy of the brain and its cerebral cortex are fully competent to sustain the multifarious activities and achievements of human personalities.

It is the organism's reserve power or what Professor Cannon of Harvard, in his aptly titled book *The Wisdom of the Body*, calls "the margin of safety" that explains those well-known cases in which the brain continues to

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function unimpaired even after a part has been injured or entirely removed. This helpful faculty, however, does not extend to certain indispensable portions of the brain; and their destruction inevitably brings about death. In general the active tissues of most organs in the human body greatly exceed in quantity what is necessary for normal functioning. Not a few human organs, such as the kidney, are paired; and in such instances the body often maintains comparative efficiency with only one of the paired organs working. Thus Nature has constructed us on the principle of generous superabundance, with the result that we are able to cope with all sorts of emergencies and tests of endurance. In his stimulating essay, "The Energies of Men," William James, in telling of the immense reserve capacities that we humans can summon up from the depths of our being, gives in graphic language convincing support to Dr. Cannon's principle.

Science not only refutes the dualistic psychology, but also casts a good deal of light on why this theory is so frequently advanced. For scientific analysis does make a number of valid distinctions in describing the human organism. Breathing, after all, is not the same as digesting; nor does one eat ideas. Furthermore, there are certain natural divisions within the human brain itself. On the one hand we have the cerebral cortex, the thin, outer, upper layer of gray matter that carries on a man's conscious thinking and coordinating. On the other hand we have the thalamus, the cerebellum and the brain-stem which together constitute the lower half of the brain, which function to a large extent as the seat of the emotions, and

which govern automatic processes like respiration and the circulation of the blood.

This lower half of the brain developed first in evolution and is often in conflict with the upper half known as the cerebrum. Modern psychologists and psychoanalysts attribute many of the neuroses so characteristic of civilized life to discoordination between the two main parts of the brain; to the subconscious or unconscious working at cross-purposes with the conscious. This wholly *natural* dualism within the brain that I have been discussing is the basis for numerous arguments claiming a *supernatural* dualism, in which the functioning of the cortex is explained in terms of a super-physical soul. The point to keep in mind is that whatever distinctions we make within the human brain or body, they are always distinctions within the same natural body; and that whatever distinctions we draw between man and other things, animate or inanimate, they are always distinctions within the same realm of Nature.

Curiously enough, various forms of supernatural religion render striking support to the thesis of unity between body and personality implied by modern science. The religions of ancient times found it most difficult to imagine a substantial and happy hereafter for human beings who had been deprived of their natural bodies by death. So it was that the ancient Greeks had an extremely gloomy conception of the after-existence as a dark, cheerless under-world where the sickly phantoms of the departed flitted about forlorn and futile, with faint voices

and nerveless limbs. It is no wonder that on one occasion the shade of Achilles, as recounted in Homer's *Odyssey*, told Ulysses: "Better to be the hireling of a stranger, and serve a man of mean estate whose living is but small, than to be ruler over all these dead and gone."<sup>51</sup> Plato, it will be recalled, suggested that this and similar passages be deleted from the poets, lest such ideas of the beyond make the warriors of the ideal state less enthusiastic about sacrificing their lives in war.

The ancient Egyptians thought that a desirable immortality was possible, but that it was inseparably connected with the practice of mummification and the proper preservation of the natural body. To this fact the great pyramids of Egypt, built primarily to shelter permanently the bodies of the kings and their families, bear imposing witness. Members of the nobility and of the wealthy class set aside enormous fortunes for the expert embalming and lasting care of their dead bodies, some of which are on display as mummies in museums to this day. The immense amount of time, energy and thought that the Egyptians devoted to mummification and supplementary ceremonies is evidence that they could not conceive of a worth-while immortality without the cooperation of the old, this-earthly body. And I could cite many beliefs and practices akin to those of the Egyptians among a number of other peoples with a developed civilization, as well as among tribes still on a primitive level. Some such tribes, for example, have followed a religious custom of killing off old people before they reach the age of decrepitude, on the supposition that only if their bodies are in fairly good con-

dition at the time of death will their souls be able to lead a satisfactory after-life.

The dominant views of the Old Testament Hebrews either conceived of death as the annihilation of the personality or held that the enfeebled spirits of the dead went to a sad and somber place called Sheol, quite similar to the Hades of the Greeks. In relation to this particular religious background, as described in the Bible, the resurrection idea of the New Testament Christians came as a brilliant solution. For it promised that the old this-earthly bodies would rise triumphant from the tomb, and enabled the faithful to envisage a splendid immortality in which their souls would be united with their former bodies become glorified and incorruptible. Despite a number of embarrassing questions posed by the world's stubborn refusal to come to an end, as expected by the early Christians, the resurrection dogma is still accepted by hundreds of millions of regular Catholics, Protestant Fundamentalists, Greek Orthodox Christians, Hebrew traditionalists and faithful Mohammedans.

No religious doctrine has ever more dramatically reinforced the idea of a close and indissoluble union between body and personality than that of the Christian resurrection. The mainstream of Christian thought has insisted from the earliest days that it will be a resurrection of the flesh, the identical body of this world without a hair or a fingernail missing. The seriousness with which the Catholic Church believes in a literal resurrection is seen in its constant and deep-seated antagonism to the cremation of the dead, a practice which psychologically, at any rate,



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tends to weaken faith in the resurrection of the corpse. During the development of medicine as a science many churchmen opposed surgery and dissection on the ground that these techniques would mutilate the body and therefore interfere with a perfect resurrection.

The more modernistic and sophisticated of the Protestants, however, influenced by the rise of science and the displacement of miracle by law, found themselves compelled to give up the notion of a literal resurrection. But they filled the well-recognized need of the immortal personality for a bodily partner by inventing spiritual, celestial, etheric, astral, and other extraordinary kinds of supernatural bodies. In so doing they assumed basically the same position — and for the same reason — taken by certain characteristically modern sects such as the Spiritualists, the Swedenborgians and the Theosophists. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the believers in immortality, of every age and culture, bestow on the surviving personality, either explicitly or by implication, a very real body. There can be no question, either, that this constitutes a sort of backhanded recognition of the monistic principle that the human personality and the human body are fundamental and inseparable accompaniments of each other.

To summarize, my brief survey of scientific facts concerning the body-mind problem, buttressed by the reactions of simple common sense and the insistence of supernatural religion upon the need of some kind of future-life body, builds up a most compelling verdict in support of the unbreakable unity of the body and personality, in-

cluding the mind and consciousness. Testifying always and everywhere to the union, one and inseparable, between body and personality, the monistic or naturalistic psychology stands today as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science. That psychology, while not yet able to describe in exact detail all the intricate workings of the body-personality, does on the whole provide a satisfactory account of the complex human organism.

The monistic relation, then, between body and personality has the standing of a proven psychological law and makes untenable any theory of a worth-while personal survival after death. Even if there existed a wise and good God who had guided the evolution of life upon this earth, he would presumably continue to follow the natural laws that he had himself established. And he could bring about immortality for men only by violating the monistic principle that he had used in the development and construction of human beings; only by becoming a miracle-worker and preternatural magician in the old style. Hence only by believing in miracles can one give credence to the idea of personal immortality; and whoever believes in miracles can literally believe in any fantasy whatsoever.

## 2. *Some Other Considerations*

As we reflect further upon the age-long idea of immortality, reason leads us to additional doubts concerning this conception. Thus when we examine actual descriptions of the future life, we find that the activities of the

death-surviving personality in any worth-while or imaginable hereafter not only demand a bodily vehicle, but also a substantial and complex environment. It was easy enough for theologians to provide this in the old days before the evolution of modern science and the progressive enlightenment of men's minds. But in more recent times many professional portrayers of the after-existence have felt constrained to drop out most of the concrete detail and to become increasingly vague, in order to keep their descriptions within the bounds of intellectual acceptability and spiritual dignity. In so doing, however, they have deprived their conceptions of the future life to a large extent of imaginative reality and emotional efficacy. At the same time their descriptions, when strictly scrutinized by logic, are seen to imply most of what has been discarded as naive and untenable in earlier representations.

On the other hand, modern cults like the Spiritualists, invincible in their childlike literalness, simply bring up to date the traditional kind of immortality description by locating in the hereafter all the conveniences of twentieth-century life from cheap cigarettes to expensive limousines. Raymond, Sir Oliver Lodge's dead son, speaking from "the other side," outlines the fundamental pattern of the Spiritualist Beyond: "Everything that is necessary to man, everything that man in a sense makes his own, has an etheric duplicate. . . . It may be that the chair you see at home, your material chair, and the chair we see, which is your chair on our side, the etheric chair, are one and the same thing really. . . . You can mold an etheric body for a thing — a piano, a clock, a desk — by loving and

liking to have it with you."<sup>52</sup> It is no wonder that certain contemporary Spiritualists react strongly against this sort of thing and refuse to go into the details of the next world.

As a matter of fact logic demands, even more than a reduplication of inanimate objects in the hereafter, counterparts there for all *living* things. They are required not only to round out the environment, but also because if we grant men souls that are to exist forever, it is most difficult to draw a reasonable line barring from a like destiny the creatures of the animal world from which man is descended and to which he is kin. Thus the pageant of immortality must include, in addition to all the millions and billions of men and submen who ever lived, the entire past and present population of the animal kingdom. Surely those who appreciate the sociability and affection displayed by household pets will agree that if an infant who lives ten days or ten months goes on to life everlasting, then good old Rover, who was a beloved member of the family for ten years, should also have an honorable place in the great beyond.

Both Spiritualists and other believers who are sufficiently stubborn in their consistency, do indeed expect to meet animals on the other side. If one visits the remarkable Canine Cemetery at Hartsdale, New York, one finds how the faithful, in the most touching and sentimental gravestone inscriptions, have borne witness to their confidence in the eternal survival of favorite dogs, cats and canaries. Here, for example, is a typical inscription in the Cemetery:

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“My adored Zowie

I do not cringe from death so much  
Since you are gone my truest friend.  
Thy dear dumb soul will wait for mine  
However long before the end.”

Now I am fond of dogs myself. But if we confer immortality on them and other congenial forms of animal life such as seals, horses and elephants, then on what logical basis can we deny it to snakes, jelly-fish, house-flies and hornets? And since there is no hard and fast boundary between animal and vegetable life, how then can we rule out an after-existence for poison-ivy and onions, for the beautiful flowers and the noble trees?

Our consideration of various descriptions of immortality naturally leads us to ask whether they have any true or verifiable meaning at all. I believe that they have; and that most portrayals of the future life constitute ethical judgments on this world, though at the same time attempted delineations of the next. By carefully analyzing the immortality ideas of different peoples we can obtain repeated proof of how earthly circumstances are always projected into the beyond and, more especially, of how the moral standards of respective cultures are duplicated in the hereafter. So it is that priests and preachers from the earliest times down to the present have consistently eternalized in heaven what they deemed the true, the good and the beautiful; and eternalized in hell what they deemed the false, the evil and the ugly.

Descriptions of immortal life have, then, almost universally symbolized the ethical patterns of mortal life. The literature of the religions, from the lengthy tomes of eminent theologians to the sermons of village ministers, abound in convincing examples of this point. Undoubtedly, however, the symbolic status and function of immortality ideas received their finest and most complete exemplification in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. In the pages of his great epic this foremost poet of the Christian faith beautifully summed up and celebrated his own ideals and those of his age, giving a detailed representation, in supernatural terms, of every important moral good and moral evil as viewed, particularly, by the Church. Dante's work well illustrates the process by which moral ideals become intimately associated with immortality ideas in the minds of men.

Immortality concepts can also be interpreted as symbolizing, in a broad sense, the diverse motivations that have impelled men to believe in a life beyond the grave. Because of the widespread and pathetic human propensity for assuming that wishes will come true, the existence of very deep and powerful motivations toward hope in a hereafter should make us doubly cautious in accepting arguments purporting to establish personal survival. Even I, disbeliever that I am, would frankly be more than glad to awaken some day to a worth-while eternal life. Among the most important motivations toward belief in a beyond are the loss of beloved friends or relatives, dreams in which the departed appear, the psychological difficulty, if not impossibility, of imagining ourselves as non-existent

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and the innate human tendency to self-preservation. This biologically instilled desire to keep on living, or negatively, to avoid dying is a major source of longings for immortality. Thus the simple desire for the continuation of present life in this world is frequently expressed in terms of a desire for a future life in another world.

The harsh impact of sudden and, above all, premature death is another prime motive in the yearning for an after-existence. It is, for instance, appalling to learn that the average expectation of life in India is reliably estimated as only twenty-seven years. Even in an advanced country like the United States more than half the deaths occur during youth or middle age, that is, before the sixty-fifth year; almost 150,000 children die yearly before reaching fifteen, while about 95,000 people lose their lives annually through accidents. Perhaps worst of all to realize is that the First World War of 1914-18 resulted in a death toll among combatants and non-combatants of some 26,000,000 and that the Second World War rolled up an equally ghastly total of dead.

Then there is the general frustration of legitimate human desires and ideals, leading immature minds to hope for the compensation of themselves in heaven and the punishment of their oppressors in hell. If one surveys the past, it is undeniable that the overwhelming majority of mankind have had little access to the better things of life; have led narrow, frustrated and brief careers; and have gone down to their graves with many of their higher potentialities as human personalities unfulfilled. The same

holds true today for by far the larger part of the world's population.

Yet no matter how many or how natural may be the motivations toward belief in a hereafter, the agitation they create within the human breast can hardly be taken as very sound proof of immortality. If human beings aspired to be as big as all space instead of as eternal as all time, their mere longing would not be thought a dependable guarantee of its own fulfilment. Nor would a profound craving to have witnessed at first-hand the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. establish in itself the actuality of pre-existence. Yet the logic of many typical arguments for an eternal existence after death can be utilized with equal force by Buddhists and Hindus to support the idea of an eternal existence before birth.

Quite obviously a drastic change in the social and economic system in most parts of the world, ensuring to everyone a secure, abundant and socially significant life, would greatly weaken the chief incentives to a belief in immortality. A more cooperative form of society would discourage present tendencies toward selfish individualism and expansion of the ego that foster the urge for everlasting self-perpetuation. If medical progress, combined with a general improvement in living conditions, were able to prolong the life-span of most people in America and elsewhere to seventy or eighty years, that potent motive toward belief in a hereafter — premature death — would tend to disappear. We do not customarily regard death at a ripe old age as tragic. And there is wisdom in the



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lines that the English poet, Walter Savage Landor, wrote on his seventy-fifth birthday:

"I warmed both hands before the fire of life;

It sinks, and I am ready to depart."<sup>53</sup>

I am not attempting here to mention and to answer all the abstract arguments on behalf of immortality advanced by theology and philosophy. In an earlier book<sup>54</sup> I have treated them fully. Suffice it to say that many of these arguments are dependent on the view that this earth is and will continue to be a vale of tears and that therefore we *must* find recompense in a realm beyond. For example, Immanuel Kant's so-called ethical argument for survival after death is of this variety; and the better things become for mankind in this present world, the worse they become for Kant's argument. What all of the more fundamental abstract arguments boil down to is the claim that men are so noble, so unique, so brilliant or altogether so important that we cannot admit they will ever perish as individuals. Yet this claim is simply another example of far-fetched wish-fulfilment.

The remarks made by Somerset Maugham, the English novelist, about arguments for an after-life hit several nails on the head at once: "A very good test of the force of arguments on which you accept a belief is to ask yourself whether for reasons of equal weight you would embark on a practical operation of any importance. Would you for example buy a house on hearsay without having the title examined by a lawyer and the drains tested by a surveyor? The arguments for immortality, weak when you take them one by one, are no more cogent when you

take them together. They are alluring, like a house-agent's advertisement in the daily paper, but to me at least no more convincing. For my part I cannot see how consciousness can persist when its physical basis has been destroyed, and I am too sure of the interconnection of my body and my mind to think that any survival of my consciousness apart from my body would be in any sense the survival of myself. Even if one could persuade oneself that there was any truth in the suggestion that human consciousness survives in some general consciousness, there would be small comfort in it."<sup>55</sup>

As for those who, like the Spiritualists and psychic researchers, advance scientific "proofs" of an after-life, they have not in the least, in my opinion, been able to discredit that monistic psychology which makes personal immortality impossible. Experimenting on a wide scale, these groups have accumulated a large variety of extra-normal phenomena and have shown conclusively that the purported spirits of the dear departed can be extremely agile in a darkened room. But these experimenters have by no means proven that the small proportion of their data which remains untainted by the fraud of mediums, or by methods something less than scientific, implies human survival after death.

The objective data actually disclosed by them are susceptible to different interpretations such as the activity of the subconscious, cryptesthesia (the existence of a hidden sixth sense) or telepathy. Telepathy through time or space, with the receiving and sending minds always operating as functions of definitely living bodies and brains,

seems to me a fairly plausible possibility. Telepathy, however, if established, would tend to explain away many of the more mysterious revelations of mediums and might well, therefore, weaken rather than strengthen the Spiritualist case for immortality. Personally, I shall sit up and take more notice when the communications from just one Spiritualist spirit eventuate in some socially useful result such as the solution of a difficult murder case. Meanwhile I shall continue to give credence to the old adage that "dead men tell no tales" and to believe that the interesting and often intriguing phenomena collected by the psychic reseachers are chiefly valuable as contributions to purely naturalistic sciences such as psychiatry and abnormal psychology.

Generally speaking, the emotional consequences of death have been so profound that discussion of the subject has rarely been carried on in an atmosphere conducive to unbiased conclusions. It is usually assumed that death as such is a very great evil and the worst enemy of man. Now certain specific ways in which death has manifested itself throughout human history, constantly striking down individuals and indeed multitudes in the prime of life and appearing in innumerable ugly forms, are correctly to be classified as evil. Yet death in and of itself, as a phenomenon of Nature, is not an evil. There is nothing mysterious about death, nothing supernatural about it, that could legitimately lead to the interpretation that it is a divine punishment inflicted upon men and other living creatures. On the contrary death is an altogether natural thing and

has played a useful and necessary role in the long course of biological evolution.

In fact, without this much-abused institution of death, which has given the fullest and most serious meaning to the survival of the fittest and thus has rendered possible the upward surge of organic species, it is clear that the animal known as man would never have evolved at all. Living and dying, birth and death, are essential and correlative aspects of the same evolutionary process. Life affirms itself *through* death, which was brought into existence *by* life and derives its entire significance *from* life. In the dynamic and creative flux of Nature the same living organisms do not go on indefinitely, but retire from the scene at a certain stage and so give way to newborn and lustier vitality. Each one of us "must die for the sake of life, for the flow of the stream too great to be dammed in any pool, for the growth of the seed too strong to stay in one shape. . . . Because these bodies must perish, we are greater than we know. The most selfish must be generous, letting his life pour out to others. The most cowardly must be brave enough to go."<sup>56</sup>

Of course there are living forms like trees, far more simply organized than human beings, that endure for centuries and tens of centuries. In his novel, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, Aldous Huxley, in satirizing the desire for immortality, stresses the ability of certain species of carp to live on for hundreds of years. He pictures an English lord attaining a hideous, sub-human prolongation of life beyond two hundred years, by means of eating the intestinal flora of this fish. The point is that ap-

parently one price of the organic complexity that makes man's career so exciting, so splendid and so vividly self-conscious is death for the personality at the end of a relatively brief time-span.

As H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley write in their noteworthy volume *The Science of Life*: "The individual has, so to speak, made a bargain. For the individual comes out of the germ-plasm and does and lives and at length dies for the sake of life. It is a bit of the germ-plasm which has arisen and broken away, in order to see and feel life instead of just blindly and mechanically multiplying. Like Faust it has sold its immortality in order to live more abundantly."<sup>57</sup> For me, at least, the understanding of death's indispensable place in Nature and of man's unique place in the great life-process is one of the best antidotes to the thought of personal extinction.

Biology, however, does not strictly rule out immortality for human beings, though it does insistently indicate that any kind of continued existence must be based on natural bodies. There is a good chance that medicine will in due course discover how to preserve the average man in good health at least up to the century mark. It is also conceivable, though most improbable, that at some very distant day science will learn how to prolong indefinitely the life of human bodies, except in cases of serious accidents that injure or crush the physical organism beyond all possibility of repair. Then there would be immortality in its original sense of "not-death"; for people would simply not die and the fundamental partnership of body and personality would never come to an end. Whether such a

use of science would be desirable is another and a doubtful matter.

Meanwhile the counsel of Humanism is to recognize the true meaning of death as the conclusion of our personal careers and to look it in the face with dignity and calm. Mankind surely has far more to be thankful for than to protest against in the end-results of Nature and evolution. And if we participate in the enjoyment of the rich and varied goods of this world, it is just that we should also accept its established laws. One of those laws makes inevitable the death of human individuals and the return of our bodies, indestructible in their ultimate elements, to the Nature that brought them forth. It is such reflections as these that enable adult-minded people to view in its proper perspective the eventual fate that comes to all human beings.

In full justice to death we must add that it is not at all the terrible thing that so many religions and philosophies have depicted. "Death," goes an old proverb, "is not feared because it is evil; it is evil because it is feared." Now if the Humanists are right in calling immortality a brain-woven conceit, death not only does away with the possibility of an eternal paradise, but also negates the threat of hells and purgatories beyond the tomb. Death as the end destroys unjustified fears as well as unjustified hopes. Since a man can die only once, the dead are beyond all good or ill. They are as totally unconcerned with life and existence as the unborn and unconceived. They have no awareness that they are dead, no consciousness that they are missing life or that the living are missing

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them. They can experience no sting, no sorrow, no disappointment, no anything. As Job said in his classic paean to the grave: "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." But the release of death is more than a sleep; it is eternal non-being where nothing can touch one further.

Humanism, then, takes its stand with the great Greek thinker who three hundred years before the birth of Christ summed up this whole matter in the pithy formula: "When we are, death is not; and when death is, we are not." Epicurus lived a long time ago, many centuries prior to the rise of modern science and when the world of Western man was yet in its infancy. For more than two thousand years now this Western world has had its fling with all sorts of charming but extravagant myths and romantic but wild philosophies. It is high time for us to cast aside the intellectual vagaries of the past, to think and act as mature men ready to cope with reality as it is, in its varying aspects of starkness and splendor. And in working through to a sound view of life and destiny, we can take no more important step than to discard the illusion of immortality:

"Give up the dream that Love may trick the fates  
To live again somewhere beyond the gleam  
Of dying stars, or shatter the strong gates  
Some god has builded high; give up the dream."<sup>58</sup>

This renunciation made by reason goes far in liberating us from the false pretensions and vain commitments of supernaturalism. Taking this path onto the plateau of truth, "we shall then be making that rare advance in

wisdom which consists in abandoning our illusions the better to attain our ideals."<sup>59</sup> For to know clearly and finally that this is our one and only life enables men to focus their minds completely upon the consummation of human happiness here in the warmth and light of our own gracious sun.

### 3. *The Destiny of Man*

Humanism definitely places the destiny of man within the very broad limits of this natural world. It submits that men can find plenty of scope and meaning in their lives through freely enjoying the rich and varied potentialities of this luxuriant earth; through preserving, extending and adding to the values of civilization; through contributing to the progress and happiness of mankind during some hundreds of million years; or through helping to evolve a new species surpassing man.

Those who cry out that human existence is meaningless and worthless without the promise of immortality are either striking a pose or expressing in extreme language the grief they have suffered from the loss of some loved one. We can say in all seriousness with Santayana "that no man of any depth of soul has made his prolonged existence the touchstone of his enthusiasms. . . . What a despicable creature must a man be, and how sunk below the level of the most barbaric virtue, if he cannot bear to live for his children, for his art, or for country."<sup>60</sup> Or for his fellow-men throughout the world, I would add.

Though in the most poignant cases of "love-devouring



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death," as Shakespeare phrased it, nothing can really offset the tragedy, the possession of wide interests and deep loyalties beyond the immediate circle of friends and family can do much to cure the hurt. Those who are involved in some absorbing work or who give themselves to some consuming cause seem best able to rise above the narrow intensities of affection that often wreak emotional havoc in people's lives. Humanists are opposed to the expansion of personal grief over a loved one's loss into a little cult of perpetual mourning.

The death of individuals cannot defeat the ongoing life of the nation or of humanity as a whole. The affirmative philosophy of Humanism accepts the inspiration of those who have passed on and proceeds to carry forward the immense tasks of social emancipation and reconstruction. It casts aside the misleading supernaturalisms of the past and proclaims the virtues of an ethics frankly dedicated to this-earthly human happiness. Such a sane and humane ethics can be more effective, as well as more high-minded, than any based on the promise of personal immortality. It is positively indecent to claim that men will act decently only if they are guaranteed the *pour-boire*, as Schopenhauer called it, of post-mortem existence. It is simply untrue that the denial of immortality instils in us a philosophy of "Eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die."

If this life is our sole opportunity for self-enjoyment, it is also our sole opportunity to make our actions count on behalf of the social good, to contribute significantly to the more lasting human values, and to leave a name

behind us that will be honored and beloved by the community. Whether or not, however, a man's name endures, whether or not he lives again in children and descendants, his influence flows on unceasingly in the great stream of human life. And the individual will find a deeper and more sustained happiness in working for a noble purpose than in spending his fast-flying years upon personal trivialities. There will be no chance to alter the irreversible record of our lives.

As for the future, it is up to the human race to work out its own destiny upon this globe. Humanism denies that there is any over-arching fate, either in the form of a Divine Providence or a malignant Satanism, that is either helping or hindering man's progress and well-being. Nature as a whole is strictly neutral toward human aims and endeavors. Nor is man in the grip of a purely materialistic, impersonal determinism that has controlled all the past and predestined all the future. Within certain limits prescribed by our earthly circumstances and by scientific law, individual human beings, entire nations and mankind in general are free to choose the paths that they truly wish to follow. To a significant degree they are the moulders of their own fate and hold in their own hands the shape of things to come.

Man has already gone far during the relatively short period — not more than 500,000 years — since he appeared upon this planet, and during the brief episode — not more than 6,000 years — since what we call civilization came into existence. He has mastered the face of the earth, the depths of the sea and the heights of the air,

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subduing and turning to his own uses the mighty forces of Nature. He has charted the vast regions of inter-stellar space, with their billions of stars and nebulae; he has penetrated into the farthest recesses of the atom, discovering its most potent secrets. He has become a veritable Hercules by multiplying his productive power through prodigious and intricate machines. He has built great cities and civilizations upon every continent; created magnificent art and literature and other cultural forms; and invented the scientific method that leads to the attainment of the truth and to the possibility of continuing progress.

Unquestionably human beings have become the unchallenged lords of creation, so far as this earth is concerned. Biologically speaking, the animal, man, has been an enormous success. Despite the wars, plagues and economic dislocations that have periodically afflicted humanity, the population of the world has for several centuries been steadily increasing and at an ever higher rate. Since 1650 it has approximately quadrupled, reaching almost 2,300,000,000 as of 1948. Notwithstanding the Second World War it gained about 175,000,000 between 1936 and 1946. The annual increase now is more than 20,000,000; and at this rate the earth will have well over three billion people by the year 2000.

Through eliminating some of the more pressing evils of present-day society, and through putting into general effect already known measures of health and education, mankind can improve considerably both physically and intellectually. That is not all. For a scientifically-induced

mutation in man may well bring into existence a more advanced species, call it *Superman* or what you will, that will be as superior to us in brain power as we are to the anthropoid ape. Such an outcome is certainly within the realm of biological possibility. "For the most part the human cerebrum is regarded as a finished product. Its evolutionary history does not support this point of view, but makes it appear far more probable that the brain of modern man represents some intermediate stage in the ultimate development of the master organ of life."<sup>61</sup> Experimental science, it is to be recalled, has already brought about mutations in some of the more lowly living forms, such as the fruit-fly.

In any case infinite possibilities remain of further triumphs for man in various realms, including, above all, the winning of adequate control over human nature itself. What I want to deny emphatically is the necessity of any ultimate doom for man, a fate often predicted today by pessimistic scientists rather than by theologians longing for the Day of Judgment. I deny the *inevitability* of this earth becoming uninhabitable at some distant date and of all the living creatures upon it being extinguished. I acknowledge that this *may* happen; but there is at least a chance that developments in science, and in social and international cooperation, over the next five or ten or hundred million years will be able to prevent the final disaster. During these immense time-spans man may well be able to achieve such mastery over this whirling sphere that he will succeed in preserving the earth indefinitely as a habitable abode. Man is not only the animal that thinks,

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but the one that can adjust best to changing environments.

Science in its efficacious modern form is only about 400 years old. What undreamed of achievements may we not expect when this science is four *thousand* or four *million* years old? Surely the science of that dim future will be sufficient to cope with, or even ward off altogether, potential Ice Ages and to overcome the danger of a fatal thinning out in the atmospheric oxygen that is so vital to living forms. Now that scientists have succeeded in unlocking the tremendous energies of the atom, as evinced in the first instance in the devastating atomic bomb, it does not seem impossible that they will eventually gain such control over the sources of heat and energy that even the ultimate and probably inevitable cooling off of the sun after some ten billions of years will not prove to be a death warrant. Undoubtedly, however, the most sensational ace that man has up his sleeve is his possible emigration, in rocket ships propelled by means of atomic energy, to other living quarters in the sky, to Mars or Venus or even some planet beyond our solar system, if and when the earth approaches the point of uninhabitability.

There are two or three faintly possible cosmic accidents in the face of which man would in all probability be helpless. One would be a colossal explosion of the whole sun resulting in an enveloping blast of heat and light that would shrivel up every living thing upon this planet and perhaps turn the earth itself back again into a flaming mass of gaseous matter. Another would be some star actually colliding with our solar system or coming so near to it that the movements of the sun and planets would be

utterly disrupted. However, neither of these events is likely to occur nor probably could occur for billions of years. Occasionally stars do explode in the grand manner, but our own sun may not be of this type or may have had its explosion billions of years ago.

As for a collision, the multitudinous stars roam through the empyrean so extremely far apart that the stellar universe in general is comparatively empty. Sir James Jeans, the British astro-physicist, has estimated that an actual collision between two stars can take place on an average of only once in 600,000,000,000,000,000 (six hundred quadrillion) years. Dr. H. Spencer Jones, Astronomer Royal of England, graphically pictures the situation in his fascinating book *Life on Other Worlds*: "Suppose we have a hollow globe the size of the earth, 8,000 miles in diameter, and that we put half a dozen tennis balls inside it and allow them to fly about in any direction, rebounding from the wall when they hit it. The chance that two of these balls will collide is about equal to the chance that two stars will come into collision."<sup>62</sup> If, moreover, the current hypothesis of "an expanding universe" is true, so that stars and nebulae are in general getting farther and farther away from one another, then the possibility of collisions becomes less and less with the passage of time.

Regarding Nature as a whole, the science of physics has formulated a distinctly pessimistic theory, called the Second Law of Thermodynamics or the Law of Entropy, which holds that while the total sum of energy in the universe remains undiminished, it will ultimately be con-

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verted into non-useful, dissipated, stagnant heat, scattered so uniformly and thinly throughout the vast oceans of space that it will have lost forever its dynamic powers. Thus the final result is supposedly to be that all the billions of stars and nebulae now existing will gradually fade away into mere radiation and become spread in minute waves over the entire cosmos. This running down of the universe, however, could only come to pass after veritable eternities of time.

But there are plenty of scientific dissenters from the alleged Law of Entropy who believe that here and there in the universe energy goes on building itself up into concentrated matter. According to the new Dust-Cloud Hypothesis, stars and planets are continually being formed from tiny sub-microscopic particles that drift through space, gather into huge dust clouds due to the pressure of starlight and finally condense into the smaller and more compact stellar bodies. It is conceivable that this process might go on indefinitely, utilizing the debris of disintegrated stars and even the most diminutive diffusions of radiation to engender an immortally pulsating Nature. If space is infinite in extent, such a process would indeed presumably continue forever.

Then, too, if the entropic law of steady decomposition is true, one wonders why the complete dissipation of energy has not already occurred during the infinite time of the past. Moreover, it would seem that with the appearance of man and the development of science, factors have come into play that can in some degree interfere with or counteract the operation of entropy, at least in

this particular corner of the cosmos. Actually, astronomers and astro-physicists remain in such doubt and disagreement about how stars are born, how they generate their phenomenal heat, enduring at a minimum for billions of years, and what is happening in the unfathomable distances of outermost space that it would be most rash to assume that the case either for or against the Law of Entropy has been scientifically established.

These various speculations naturally raise the question as to whether organic species exist or can exist elsewhere in the universe than upon our earth. Now though living forms can adapt themselves to a very wide range of circumstances, as witness the history of plant and animal development upon this globe, there are certain conditions that are absolutely prerequisite for the birth and evolution of life. Stars and suns are automatically eliminated as possible abodes of life because they are all nothing more nor less than blazing furnaces, with average interior temperatures of about 20 million degrees centigrade. A planet like Mercury is ruled out because it is too near the sun and therefore too hot; a planet like Jupiter is ruled out because it is too far away from the sun and therefore too cold.

Jupiter, together with Saturn, is also too big, having retained on that account, through gravitational attraction, too much atmosphere, including so large a proportion of poisonous gases as to make life impossible. On the other hand, a planet very much smaller than the earth would be unsuitable for life because it would not have been able to retain *any* atmosphere. Hence we are forced to con-



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clude that life can arise only upon planets that, like our own, are of a medium size and are neither too close to their parent sun nor too distant from it. In this class belong Mars and Venus, upon both of which some astronomers believe that living forms, at least of a vegetative nature, exist. This hypothesis, however, remains unproven.

If life is to be found outside of our solar system, the first necessity is of course the existence of a planet or a family of planets revolving about some star. In a cosmos of such tremendous dimensions it seems probable that once in a great while there has occurred the proper concatenation of events for the creation of a planetary system. To quote Dr. Jones again: "If we could travel through the universe and survey each star in turn, we should not find life here, there and everywhere. Occasionally in our wanderings we should find a star with a family of planets: few of these could be the home of life, but some there would be which would comply with our requirements. If the proportion of planets on which life can exist is not more than one in a thousand, or even one in a million, the total number of worlds that are suitable for life would yet be considerable, so vast is the scale on which the universe is constructed."<sup>63</sup> I should add that the mere possibility of life on some other planet does not mean that it has actually come into being or is certain to do so.

We can make all sorts of conjectures as to what paths life might take on some other earth-like sphere: whether the highest forms might develop, for example, from some species not mammal in structure; whether thinking beings equal or superior to man in intellectual capacity have

evolved; and whether, if creatures possessing mind do exist in other parts of the universe, man will ever be able to communicate with them. Considering our remarkable developments in the field of wireless telegraphy and radio, some sort of communication would surely not be beyond the bounds of credibility.

I think I have said enough to indicate the broad imaginative vistas that seem to me a legitimate part of the Humanist philosophy. Of course I have been indulging in speculations; but they are justified *counter-speculations*, I believe, to the unduly pessimistic conclusions of many contemporary scientists and philosophers. Genuine Humanists cannot for a moment admit that man must necessarily be defeated in his career in this universe. Certainly ultimate defeat is possible; but certainly, too, it is possible that man will be able to prolong cognitive life forever in this great and eternal Nature. Any lesser hope or aim would be an unwarranted and ignominious surrender in advance.

Whether or not mankind meets some crushing cosmic doom a billion or two hundred million or a mere million years hence, the progress and well-being of the human race over such enormous tracts of time assuredly offers prospects of social significance that should provide sufficient satisfaction to all but the incurably egoistic. The philosophy of Humanism, with its conscious limitation of the human enterprise to this existence, sets us free to concentrate our entire energies, without distraction by either hopes or fears of individual immortality, on that building of the good society today and tomorrow that has been the dream of saints and sages since the dawn of history.

## CHAPTER IV HUMANISM'S THEORY OF THE UNIVERSE

### 1. *Science and Its Implications*

Any complete philosophy of existence requires a carefully worked out theory of the universe, in technical terms a cosmology, a metaphysics, an ontology or a world-view. As we have already seen, Humanism believes that Nature itself constitutes the sum total of reality, that matter and not mind is the foundation-stuff of the universe, and that supernatural entities simply do not exist. The non-reality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that men do not possess supernatural and immortal souls; and, on the level of the universe as a whole, that our cosmos does not possess a supernatural and eternal God.

Humanism's attitude toward the universe, like its judgment as to the nature and destiny of man, is grounded on solid scientific fact. The supernatural beliefs of Christianity were originally formulated in a pre-scientific era in which it was thought that the earth, with the sun and the multitudinous stars of the firmament revolving around it, was the center of the cosmos. In a temporal sense the earth and its forms of life were regarded as old as anything else, since Nature in its entirety was supposedly created by God only a few thousand years before the birth

of Christ. It is understandable how thoughtful persons, with such assumptions about the world, could come to suppose that man, as far and away the highest of earth's creatures, was the darling of the universe; and that behind the visible creation dwelt an omnipotent, benevolent and personal God, a Divine Providence whose chief concern was the care and guidance of human beings.

Modern science has completely and fundamentally altered the primitive picture of things that encouraged this particular religious view. The astronomers have shown that our little planet, far from being the center of the cosmos, is not even the center of the solar system, which is itself a mere microscopic blur upon the unimaginably vast canopy of the heavens. The earth revolves around a mighty sun more than a million times its size and nearly 93,000,000 miles distant. And this sun is only an average star in a local star-cloud situated toward the edge of a great spiral nebula or galaxy containing altogether some 30 billion stars. The larger part of this nebula or galactic system, as it is called, we see in the night skies as the Milky Way. The nearest star outside of our solar system, with its retinue of nine planets, is 25,000,000,000 miles away or 4.27 light-years. A light-year, about 6 trillion miles, is the distance that light, speeding through space at the rate of 186,000 miles per second, travels in a year. The diameter of the galactic system is estimated at 220,000 light-years.

It was the Copernican revolution of the sixteenth century that toppled the earth from its traditional position as the focal point of the cosmos. During the twentieth

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century the astronomers have brought about a second revolution in our conception of the heavens that decreases even further the spatial significance of our planet. For they have proved that our galactic system is only one out of millions and perhaps billions of similar star clusters scattered throughout the universe, each possessing its own thousands of millions of flaming stars. The closest nebula beyond the galactic system is 850,000 light-years from the earth, while the distances of the farther nebulae run into hundreds of millions of light-years. About 100,000,000 of these nebulae or "island universes" can now be observed through existing telescopes, but this number may become doubled after the new 200-inch Hale telescope at Mount Palomar has gone into full operation. The curved and finite, yet absolutely stupendous universe suggested by Dr. Albert Einstein has a radius of roughly 35 billion light-years or 210,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles.

It is not important whether all these various estimates are precisely accurate, which of course they are not; the important thing is the staggering immensity of the cosmos. Sir James Jeans sums up the situation graphically: "At a moderate computation," he says, "the total number of stars in the universe must be something like the total number of specks of dust in London. Think of the sun as something less than a single speck of dust in a vast city, of the earth as less than a millionth part of such a speck of dust, and we have perhaps as vivid a picture as the mind can really grasp of the relation of our home in space to the rest of the universe."<sup>64</sup> If perchance the total ag-

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gregate of stars turns out eventually to be as numerous as all the specks of dust in the entire United States, I do not think our mental picture would become much altered.

The time-spans of this cosmos in which we live are equally impressive. The average star, including our own sun, is probably from about 5,000,000,000,000 to 10,000,000,000,000 years old. And what infinities of time had no doubt passed before the present array of nebulae made their appearance in the heavens! Competent geologists put the age of the earth at about 2,000,000,000 years. The astronomers have not been able to reach agreement as to whether originally the earth and its companion planets somehow broke away from an already stabilized sun or whether they were built up from relatively independent inter-stellar dust clouds whirling about a gaseous nucleus that later condensed to form the sun. Biologists estimate that living forms have been in existence on our planet anywhere from 300,000,000 to 1,000,000,000 years. The generally accepted figure for the Age of Man is from 300,000 to 500,000 years.

Thus the findings of modern science utterly blast the world-view of old-time religion. In terms of space and time man and his tiny earth look extremely insignificant in relation to the rest of the universe. If there is a Supreme Being ruling over these billions of Milky Ways that roam through the unending corridors of the sky, he can hardly be the neighborly, fatherly God of Christianity. And if there actually is, in Tennyson's words, "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves," then what transpires on this earth is only an infinitesimal part of the

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trend and such earthly evidences of Providence as theologians and metaphysicians purport to find can hardly be taken as applying to the universe in its entirety. Logically, a supernatural Mind or Purpose behind everything must include all those never-ending galaxies that extend into the farthestmost regions of space and must cover all those untold billions of years in past and future that so stun the imagination. This is a point that the best of the religious philosophers neglect or overlook altogether.

These considerations strongly impel us to the conclusion that the universe at large is indifferent, *neutral* toward the welfare, the ideals and the fate of man. They also react significantly on the idea of an after-life by suggesting that our very imperfect race of men-creatures is scarcely important or worthy enough to warrant immortality. This would hold true even if a cosmic God did exist, especially since there remains plenty of time in which he might evolve a much higher order of being than *homo sapiens*.

What I said in the last chapter about the development of mind and the unity of the personality and body weightily affects, on its part, the problem of God's existence. If mind gradually evolved over hundreds of millions of years upon this planet and if it is inextricably bound up with the complex and delicately adjusted kind of physical structure represented by the body and brain of man, then it appears conclusive that mind can exist elsewhere only if it has an intricate material base. But the God of the traditional religions is a supernatural, spiritual Being existing prior to and independently of matter; his mind is not dependent on physical structure, having created out of

the void in the first instance every bit of matter there is. In any case we cannot conceive how there could possibly be a physical structure, a cosmic cortex, competent to sustain a Divine Mind functioning over the entire vast realm of space and time and busying itself with every last detail, such as man and the earth, throughout the infinite empire of Nature.

Latter-day theologians have claimed that the general theory of biological evolution proves the presence of a God working upon or within Nature. But the evolutionary upsurge that has culminated in man shows little sign of divine purpose or prevision. The processes of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, taking advantage of the many mutations that occur over periods of millions of years, adequately account for the origin and development of species. Though admittedly biologists have not yet discovered precisely how organic forms evolved from inanimate matter, this gap in knowledge can hardly be taken as proof of a guiding force. The existence of God cannot be deduced from any temporary ignorance of Nature's ways.

Of course the scientific concept of evolution, broadly interpreted as applying not only to living forms, but also to the earth as a material body, the solar system and the endless stars and galaxies, effectively negates the old religious idea of a divine creation of the whole universe. Furthermore, if we take seriously the lessons of evolution, it would appear that God as a great cosmic Mind and Purpose, if he did exist, would have to be the end-prod-



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uct of a very long evolutionary process rather than its initiator and overseer.

Scientific progress in physics and chemistry, though having less obvious and spectacular consequences for religion and theism than the ideas I have been discussing, is of profound significance for the Humanist philosophy. The salient point here is the radical transformation in the accepted view of matter, so long looked upon as something base, uncreative and inert. It may help to review some of the elementary facts.

Modern research has demonstrated that matter, from its hugest aggregations down to its smallest particles, is made up of unceasingly active units of restless energy. This seemingly solid desk at which I sit and these seemingly well-knit hands with which I write are in the final analysis mostly empty space in which and through which there move at lightning speeds the basic molecules, of which science knows some 200,000 different varieties. Molecules are a hundred-millionth of an inch in diameter; and in a single glass of water there are billions and trillions and quadrillions of them. A water molecule, for example, is built of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen, which explains the familiar formula of  $H_2O$  known to every schoolboy. Every other kind of molecule is what it is because of its own special combination of atoms.

Atoms are constructed along the lines of miniature, though complicated, solar systems and in their turn have as ultimate components protons and neutrons, making up the nucleus, and electrons revolving around this central "sun." Each of the ninety-two different chemical elements

or species of atom\* is determined by its particular configuration of proton-neutron nucleus and of electrons revolving around it. In the simplest and lightest atom, that of hydrogen, only one electron revolves; while in the most complex and heavy, that of uranium, ninety-two electrons speed through their orbits. Electrons move with the incredible velocity of over 100,000 miles a second. The invention of the atomic bomb in 1945 dramatically revealed the enormous energies that have always been latent in the heart of the atom. Contrary to some reports, however, the atom is not equivalent to a form of electricity. For protons are tiny particles of matter carrying a positive electric charge, electrons particles bearing a negative electric charge, and the essential neutrons particles having no electric charge at all.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity constitutes another recent scientific advance which strengthens the Humanist position that the universe is fundamentally a great system of matter-energy. For Einstein's discoveries render unacceptable the old idea of an Absolute Space and an Absolute Time and show instead that space and time are both derivative from events, that they are, in fact, forms of relationship between material objects. Professor Sellars is right: "Time is but another name for the sequence of events. Time is change. . . . Time is in the world, and not the world in Time."<sup>65</sup> We can find the germ of this idea as early as Aristotle.

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\* Four new varieties of atom were created by scientists through the experimentation revolving around the atomic bomb. Additional atomic elements may be produced in the future.

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A simple analysis of how we calculate time leads to the correct interpretation. Days and months and years are measurements in terms of a relation between material events, that is, between the revolving earth and the sun or other stellar bodies. Similarly, watches and clocks tell the time in minutes and hours by means of hands moving at a set rate in relation to a stable dial. There is nothing subjective, as some commentators have thought, about Relativity, since it establishes the velocity of light as an absolute standard of reference and sets up a general law that puts all measurements of time and space on an entirely objective basis. It is significant that Dr. Einstein calls himself a Humanist.

Taking into consideration all of these scientific developments, we realize that matter, even at its most elementary level, is a thing of the most tremendous dynamism, complexity, versatility, and potentiality. It no longer seems mysterious that life and finally human beings should have arisen out of such altogether remarkable stuff. Moreover, science has found that this matter in motion, though it is always changing from one to another of its multitudinous forms, is absolutely indestructible and eternal. This point is summed up in what is known as the Law of the Conservation of Energy or, to use alternate phrasing, the Law of the Indestructibility of Matter.

Thus creative matter needs no ultimate theistic Power to sustain it; no Prime Mover, as with Aristotle, to set it in motion and keep it in motion; no Divine Principle to impregnate it with the capacity of flowering as a whirl-

ing nebula containing billions of stars, as a warming and light-giving sun or as a fertile planet that produces all the wonders of life. Matter is self-existent, self-active, self-developing, self-enduring. For philosophy there is nothing to be gained intellectually and much to be lost by positing a supernatural God or Creator or First Cause behind the great material universe.

When the child asks, "Who made God?" he is unwittingly interjecting a comment that is both logical and philosophical. Similarly relevant is the old oriental myth that the world rests upon the back of a huge elephant that rests upon the back of a monstrous tortoise. For if everything has a definite cause, then God, too, must have a cause and so on *ad infinitum*. The fact is that regardless of how far we push our inquiries, at one point or another we are compelled to assume *something self-existent* that possesses certain powers and potentialities. Otherwise we become involved in a never-ending regress of explanations and assumptions. God as a First Cause simply constitutes a large-scale miracle gratuitously intruding at the alleged starting-point of everything.

Furthermore, the argument from a First Cause takes for granted that there must have been a beginning of the cosmos. However, no logical necessity forces us to the conclusion that there was a beginning in time; and indeed it would seem more sensible to accept Aristotle's opinion that the universe is eternal. In fact, those who postulate a supernatural God as Creator or First Cause attribute to

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him eternal being and are therefore assuming, like most non-theists, an eternally existing reality.

Many persons consider the universe "mysterious" because they can get no satisfactory answer as to the *why* of everything. "Why," they ask, "should there have been a universe in the first place? Why is there any existence at all?" Such questions assume in their very formulation that there must be a great over-all Purpose in the cosmos; and accordingly they expect an answer in terms of an all-embracing Purpose. The Humanist believes that these conundrums are essentially insoluble because actually no such Purpose can possibly be found. In any case, if we are to look upon the origin of the universe as a mystery, it does little good to compound that mystery by conjuring up a super-material God in back of the universe itself.

In specific scientific explanations as well as in ultimate philosophical questions a stage frequently ensues where it is profitless to keep on asking "Why?" At such a juncture we have to say: "Things are simply constructed this way or behave this way and that's all there is to it." The speed of light is what it is and there is little sense in asking why that speed should be 186,000 miles per second. The law of gravitation operates as it does and two plus two make four. In neither case can an intelligible answer be given as to *why*. In both philosophy and other fields of knowledge we eventually hit rock bottom in the pursuit of certain inquiries.

Considerations similar to those we have evoked against the First Cause argument for the existence of God are pertinent to the argument from Design, which holds that

the universe is so beautiful, splendid and well-planned that a great Designer, a conscious God, must have worked it all out. Philosophically what the theists do here, besides assuming much more harmony than there actually is, is to treat qualities that are merely potential in matter, appearing at a certain stage in its development, as if they had always existed. The final result is to take mind, purpose and other attributes of matter when organized in the form of human beings, and read them back into the original constitution of the cosmos. This conversion of eventual functions into antecedent forces, of potentiality into actuality, is one of the most persistent and harmful of all philosophic fallacies.

The primary meaning of potentiality is precisely that qualitatively new things can come into existence through fresh combinations and developments among the old. Hydrogen and oxygen possess the potentiality of eventuating in water, if they come together in certain proportions, without either of them *being* water to begin with. In an analogous way matter possesses the potentiality of eventuating in organisms that can think, without mind having existed in the first place as an attribute of matter or of a Divine Thinker behind matter. The ordinary theistic view, insisting that many of the most striking qualities that emerge in matter were already in God, implies an unacceptable curtailment of genuine novelty in the world.

Certain philosophers, of whom Aristotle is the prototype, have felt that it was impossible for matter to move continually from potentiality to actuality on its own, and have gone astray in setting up a God whose prime func-

tion is to stimulate and direct this movement. In the twentieth century we may take as an example Professor Alfred North Whitehead, who defines God as "the principle of concretion." This God determines in each case that which is to become concrete reality; out of the infinite number of possibilities, he selects those that are to be actualized, concretized, as specific objects or events. Matter, of course, requires no such divine aid in its natural unfolding; and Dr. Whitehead's God of Concretion is as superfluous as the carrying of coals to Newcastle.

The modern cosmology of the philosopher-statesman Jan Christian Smuts, former Premier of the Union of South Africa, repeats some of these same errors. Mr. Smuts has developed a philosophy he calls Holism, the central feature of which is an alleged whole-making tendency running through Nature, with the wholes becoming more homogeneous, more complex and higher from the standpoint of value. Smuts says that we cannot account for evolution without this whole-making tendency as a principle of explanation. It is his God. Again, we see in Holism the common mistake of taking away from many-sided, infinitely productive matter the credit that belongs to it and interposing within it a special power from out of the blue.

This discussion leads us to a further examination of the very important law of parsimony, which I mentioned in the preceding chapter\* as demanding that any scientific explanation be based on the fewest assumptions necessary

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\* See p. 114.

for it to account for all of the facts involved. This cardinal principle of economy or simplicity of hypothesis was first formulated in the fourteenth century by an English philosopher, William of Occam, in the words: "Entities [of explanation] are not to be multiplied beyond need." It became aptly known as "Occam's Razor." Some three hundred years later Isaac Newton expressed the same idea when he wrote in his great book, the *Principia*: "Nature does nothing in vain, and more is in vain when less will serve; for Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes."<sup>66</sup>

This fundamental law of the simplicity of Nature has been a paramount intellectual tool in the advance of science. This law does not deny the truth that Nature often operates in a most complex manner; and under no circumstances can it over-ride the observed facts of such complexity, as, for instance, in the organization of the human body. The law means only that we should not bring in hypotheses unnecessarily to explain a situation, whether it happens to be comparatively simple or comparatively complex. The principle of parsimony expresses negatively the scientific rule that every hypothesis must meet the requirements of affirmative empirical proof before being accepted.

A good example of the significance of the law of parsimony is provided by a controversy that Galileo had regarding the mountains he discovered on the moon. A certain Ludovico delle Colombe attempted to refute him by claiming that the apparent valleys of the moon were really filled with an invisible crystalline substance. Galileo re-



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plied sarcastically by saying that this suggestion was so excellent that he would apply it further and that, accordingly, it seemed probable that the moon had on it mountains of this same substance ten times higher than the ones he had observed! Now the reason Galileo's mocking answer was so devastating is that it showed that Ludovico was disregarding the principle of parsimony and that once you do this, you promptly open the door to a thousand and one absurd hypotheses and wild vagaries.

Applying this law to what I was saying about matter and Divinity, we can see that it rules out as superfluous the hypothesis of a supernatural God as Creator or First Cause of the universe and as the Originator and Preserver of the higher qualities such as mind and purpose and love. It eliminates the God of monotheism as an explanation of the behavior of our vast cosmos just as it eliminates the littler and more limited gods of polytheism and animism as an explanation of the behavior of rivers, seas, storms, lightning and stars. It makes a supernatural Soul for the universe at large as unnecessary and unsound, scientifically and philosophically, as a supernatural soul for each individual man and animal.

The extension of scientific law in general to realm after realm in modern times has brought about increasing difficulty in conceiving what God would do even if he did exist. The only function that Newton could find for the Deity was a sort of cosmic tinkering in adjusting certain irregularities in the movements of the more distant stars and comets—irregularities that soon afterward became fully accounted for by mathematicians and astronomers.

As I have already shown, Newton's fellow-Deists as a group held there was no divine interference in the established order of Nature and that God had wound up the world, as it were, at the start and then let it go its own way as a completely self-regulating machine. Laplace, the French astronomer, took the logical next step and, when asked by Napoleon why he did not mention God in his *Mechanique Celeste*, loftily remarked: "Sire, I had no need of that hypothesis." One can imagine what Laplace would have said in answer to a question seriously propounded recently by a British philosopher: "Is the eternal brooding of God necessary to keep space from disintegrating?"

Some philosophers and theologians accept the universality of scientific law, and then claim that scientific laws are the expression of God's mind and that through them he rules the cosmos. But this argument embodies a serious misinterpretation of the nature of scientific law. Scientific laws do not "govern" the universe as a king governs his subjects; nor does matter in motion "obey" laws as do the people, or at least some people, in a functioning state. Scientific laws are the expression in human terms of the way matter behaves, of the stable and enduring habits of action to which matter has become accustomed over aeons of time. Again, to utilize the law of parsimony, events determine their own laws and require no Supreme Law-Giver to lay down or maintain their patterns of behavior. The manifest order in the universe does not call for a Divine Orderer.

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In New York City in the year 1940, at a conference of philosophers, theologians and scientists, Albert Einstein admirably summed up the Humanist standpoint when he stated: "During the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution human fantasy created gods in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. . . . The idea of God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old conception of the gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for instance, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for the fulfilment of their wishes. . . . The more a man is imbued with the ordered regularity of all events, the firmer becomes his conviction that there is no room left by the side of this ordered regularity for causes of a different nature."<sup>67</sup>

It is evident, then, that God, once imagined to be an omnipresent force throughout the whole world of Nature and man, has been increasingly tending to seem omnibabsent. Everywhere intelligent and educated people rely more and more on purely secular and scientific techniques for the solution of their problems. As science advances, the belief in divine miracle and the efficacy of prayer becomes fainter and fainter. Certain popular sayings have long recognized this situation, such as Benjamin Franklin's "God helps those who help themselves" and the more recent "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition." Today the prevailing tendency in a culturally advanced country like America, regardless of what formal tributes may be paid to traditional faiths, is to retire the Almighty

from his former role in this-earthly affairs and to look upon him as a sort of Honorary Chairman of the Universe.

Needless to say, many scientists would not agree with the philosophic implications I have drawn from various branches of science; and many scientists have arrived at conclusions that are the very opposite of mine in regard to the questions of God and immortality. It is to be remembered that a scientist, expert and competent in his own department of knowledge, does not necessarily carry over an objective attitude of mind into philosophic and religious issues any more than into economic and political ones. It is an acknowledged fact that again and again in the history of Western thought scientists have lent their prestige to the most far-fetched cosmological theories. Johann Kepler, one of the founders of modern astronomy, believed in astrology and sun-worship. The incomparable Newton himself went considerably astray in his philosophical peregrinations; while in our own day well-known scientists talk loosely of how the telescope or the test-tube has at last led to the discovery of God and how the long conflict between science and religion has finally come to an end. No matter how brilliant the scientist, we must always ask him for his credentials when he wanders into fields that are not his own.

It remains to note that ideas of God, as well as ideas of immortality, have symbolized the ethical values and the ethical progress of mankind. In the West a God of cruelty and vengeance gradually evolved, in the thought of the more advanced religious groups, into a God of

love and forgiveness. As Robert Ingersoll once remarked, "An honest God is the noblest work of man." The traditional religions have continually "materialized the terms of their moral philosophy into existing objects and powers."<sup>68</sup> And some philosophers have been so impressed by the beauty and aptness of supernatural religion as metaphor that they regard criticism of it on the grounds of its being contrary to fact as an illiberal practice of the literal-minded.

Now it would be very pleasant indeed if all religious persons adopted the attitude of George Santayana and his school that concepts of God and immortality are to be interpreted as poetic symbolism instead of truth. The fact is, however, that comparatively few of those who are affiliated with the supernaturalist religions are as emancipated as Mr. Santayana. In all ages religious convictions have had real and moving efficacy for the masses of men only when they have been taken quite literally. Such convictions, of course, have been closely bound up with colorful rituals that appeal more to the emotions than to the mind. Yet while it is true that religion is much more than a system of beliefs, it is also true that a definite set of beliefs is necessary to any religion.

What sheer objective evidence compels us to take literally is the literalness and tenacity with which men have held to religious dogmas throughout history. I think, therefore, that philosophy has the duty of pointing out the falsity of outworn religious ideas, however estimable they may be as a form of art. We cannot act as if all religion were poetry while the greater part of it still func-

tions in its ancient guise of illicit science and backward morals; we cannot smile upon religion as mere metaphor when the most powerful sections of it still teach the metaphor as dogma; we cannot nonchalantly assume that supernaturalism is a dead issue when it is still one of the predominant influences in the United States and most countries of the globe.

Professor William Pepperell Montague of Columbia University suggests as a step toward the recovery of philosophy in America that its teachers abandon "the 'genteel tradition' according to which controversial religious questions are politely evaded; and that instead they face those questions and discuss them *pro* and *con* fairly and courteously but frankly. . . . All too often the members of a class in philosophy get the impression that the subject is artificial and remote from their lives just because the teacher has politely refrained from connecting his thoughts about ultimate and important matters with the religious frame of reference in terms of which the student formulates the questions that are ultimate and important to him."<sup>69</sup> Now though Professor Montague does not happen to be a Humanist, his comment is most appropriate and fits in well with the Humanist's determination to take religious issues seriously, whether he is functioning within academic walls or in the larger world outside.

## 2. *The Rejection of Dualism and Idealism*

It is obvious that the Humanist cosmology or theory of

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the universe, in line with the traditional Naturalisms and Materialisms, leaves no room for world-views in which supernaturalism plays any part. Thus it rules out the great cosmological or metaphysical Dualisms which divide the universe into two separate realms, a material one and a spiritual one; and which also divide man himself into two separate entities, hence making inevitable a dualistic psychology and a dualistic ethics. Representative philosophic or theological Dualisms are those of orthodox Christianity and of the outstanding Catholic philosopher, Thomas Aquinas; of Plato and Plotinus, with their emphasis on eternal Ideas rather than God; of René Descartes, who, despite his supernaturalist cosmology, so notably advanced the cause of science; and of Immanuel Kant, who shattered through rigorous logic the so-called rational arguments for the existence of God and immortality only to re-establish these two central concepts of supernaturalism as categorical demands of man's faith in the worth-whileness of moral effort.

Dualism of one type or another has ever been a refuge for supernatural religion. So much that I have already said in this book has aimed at refuting this philosophy, with its belief in a personal God and a personal immortality, that I shall spend little more time upon it. I do want to give, however, some special consideration to the dualistic cosmology of Descartes, who carried on with supernaturalism, yet at the same time made such great contributions to scientific thought in the seventeenth century that we still talk about the Cartesian revolution. Descartes conceived of the whole physical world, including

the human body, as a vast machine describable and explainable in terms of mathematical and mechanical laws. "Give me extension and motion," Descartes boasted, "and I will construct the universe." And he proceeded to synthesize, popularize and develop the burgeoning new science of his era.

In working out the full implications of the cosmos as a huge and intricate machine, Descartes banished all purpose and spiritual significance from material Nature. Such categories held true only for that supernatural realm in which God and man's immortal soul and mind operated. Since this God did not interfere with the workings of the physical universe, that universe and this earth were left open for science to explore as it would. On the other hand, since Descartes reserved a place in his system for God and immortality, he could not rightly be accused of being impious or irreligious. There is some reason to believe, however, that the almost absolute divorce that Descartes postulated between the realms of Nature and super-Nature was a conscious device to free science from religious controls without offending the Church. In any case the Church was continually condemnatory of Descartes, put his books on the Catholic Index and at one time wished to have him executed on the charge of atheism. Descartes felt that he was in such grave danger that he suppressed or left unfinished much valuable work.

Though Descartes greatly stimulated scientific progress and thereby the Humanist spirit, his drastically dualistic cosmology brought confusion worse confounded into philosophy. The particular view of the material world that



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he and his followers expounded "ushered in a new process of the denaturalization of man and human experience. It transformed the conception of Nature into a purely mechanical system of tiny billiard-balls following the laws of dynamics. . . . Thus human experience was removed from Nature and made 'subjective': its locus was in man, in a separate substance, 'mind,' not in Nature at all. It was the mechanical effect of Nature upon and in man's 'mind,' not a co-operation of natural powers. The varieties of human experience, religious, moral, even intellectual, became quite literally supernatural — they were in no sense natural processes. Man's 'mind' was no longer a natural function, but an independent substance with an extra-natural status."<sup>70</sup>

Descartes' insistence on the primacy of consciousness, which he epitomized in the famous words, "I think, therefore I am," started a strain of mental subjectivism that hypnotized modern philosophy for almost three hundred years. It resulted in a lamentable over-emphasis on theory of knowledge (or epistemology) and led straight to the long, fascinating, yet often far-fetched argumentation of John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, Kant and Hegel. Hume, whose brilliant scepticism cut so deep that mind as well as matter seemed to dissolve in his analysis, reveals in a frank moment his misgivings about it all: "I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further."<sup>71</sup>

The chief effect of modern subjectivism was to bring forth a bewildering series of idealistic philosophies rashly asserting that everything that exists is in the last analysis mind or idea. This type of philosophy ought rightly to have called itself *Idea-ism*, but instead adopted the word *Idealism*, which in the field of ethics is a perfectly clear term meaning the pursuit of high moral ideals. Thus it has become necessary always to distinguish between idealism as an ethical concept and Idealism as the name of an inclusive philosophical system.

Extreme subjective Idealism argues that objects exist only as and when perceived by the individual human mind. This position leads straight to that form of madness known as solipsism, in which for each human being his own self is the whole of reality, with all other persons and the entire universe merely ideas in his consciousness. The more common and influential variety of Idealism is objective Idealism, which holds that the whole cosmos, from the remotest nebula down to every last atom, exists by virtue of being in the all-perceiving mind of God. Every human individual, every stick and stone, every planet and star, is a thought, more or less complex, in the Divine Consciousness. A limerick fashionable at Oxford, long a stronghold of the idealist philosophy, expresses this notion quite well:

There was a young man who said, "God,  
How very remarkably odd

That this int'resting tree  
Should continue to be

When there's no one about in the quad."

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“Dear Sir, your inquiry is odd,  
For I’m always about in the quad;  
And that’s why the tree  
Continues to be,  
Since observed by yours faithfully, God.”

The two most important representatives of objective Idealism were the eighteenth-century English churchman, Bishop Berkeley, and the nineteenth-century German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who re-named his God the Absolute. Hegel’s ponderous and comprehensive system created a powerful tradition of its own and for the larger part of the nineteenth century became the dominant academic philosophy in both Europe and America. Professor George H. Howison, who taught his own special brand of Idealism, well summed up the prevailing temper of American philosophy at a symposium in 1895 when he said: “We are all agreed” on one “great tenet,” which is “the entire foundation of philosophy itself: that explanation of the world which maintains that the only thing absolutely real is mind; that all material and temporal existences take their being from Consciousness that thinks and experiences; that out of consciousness they all issue, to consciousness they are presented, and that presence to consciousness constitutes their entire reality.”<sup>72</sup>

In the United States Hegelianism was in the ascendant in the eastern universities during the last decades of the nineteenth century and flourished in the Middle West in what was known as the St. Louis School. In the early years of the twentieth century Josiah Royce

at Harvard became the leader of American Idealism, while more recently another Harvard professor, William Ernest Hocking, has perhaps been its ablest exponent. Outside of academic circles the idealist doctrine had a powerful effect on Ralph Waldo Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists; and it found somewhat eccentric expression in both the health-centered cult of Christian Science and the naive religion of Spiritualism centered around the hope of immortality. Hegelian Idealism also influenced profoundly many thinkers who later broke away from it, among them Karl Marx and John Dewey. There can be little doubt that Hegel, as the greatest spokesman for one of the main philosophic positions, will go down in history as one of the outstanding figures in philosophy.

Dr. Samuel Johnson gave the classic common-sense answer to Idealism when, in discussing Berkeley's philosophy, he declared, "I refute it, *thus*," and kicked a good-sized stone out of his path. More seriously, we can state that Idealism repeats the mistake of other anthropomorphic philosophies by ascribing to the universe at large a purely human or organic attribute such as mind or consciousness. The idealistic fallacy can be further exposed by analyzing the intriguing suggestion of Sir James Jeans and others that God is the Master Mathematician. Jeans, being a notable astronomer and mathematician himself, has been impressed by the extent to which the behavior of everything in the cosmos can be expressed in mathematical terms. From this scientific truism he takes a dizzying leap into the blue and concludes that mathematics, as applied

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by a Divine Mathematician, is the very foundation of the universe.

But mathematics merely expresses the *relation* between things or symbolizes them; numbers are not the things themselves, nor do they constitute a higher reality. All men drafted under the United States Selective Service Act of 1948 are assigned numbers. In certain connections and for certain purposes the conscripts are referred to by these numbers. This does not mean that they suddenly become mere mathematical symbols or that those symbols become somehow more real than the flesh-and-blood persons they represent. The same considerations apply to American automobiles and the registration plate each of them is required to display. Though under certain circumstances a car will be referred to by its registration number, the solid materiality of the machine remains just the same.

Now ideas in general, of which numbers are only one class, likewise express and symbolize the relations between definite material objects and events. What the idealist does in essence is illegitimately to identify the things that are symbolized with the symbols used; to magically transform objects and events into symbols or ideas, and then the whole universe itself into Idea. This unwarranted metaphysical abstraction he proceeds to call God or the Absolute.

On the ethical side, the worst feature of Hegel's Idealism was that since its God unfolds from out of his own consciousness the entire universe, including all human life and activity, evil becomes unreal. For if every act is the

expression of the Absolute Mind, the Universal Goodness, then everything that exists and everything men do must be good; the most excruciating physical pain and the most devastating mental anguish become negligible throbbings within the Divine Experience. So there is left no genuine distinction between good and bad; and the nerve of morality is cut. In fact the idealist philosophy was widely used as a system of apologetics for the *status quo*; and because for Hegel the state was the highest embodiment of the Absolute, the logical consequence was the attitude that the state can do no wrong.

The most valuable element in Hegel was his recognition of the fundamentally dynamic and evolutionary character of the universe and human society; and his emphasis on the inter-relatedness of things. Hegel saw the whole of existence as a great complex dialectical movement, meaning that contradictions, identified as thesis and antithesis, continually work themselves out and merge in a higher stage identified as the synthesis. Idealism, however, turns things completely upside down by attributing this dialectical movement to conscious mind instead of matter.

It was Hegel's dialectical view of reality, corrected and revised through the elimination of the idealistic cosmology, that Marx and Engels appropriated and used as one of the foundation-stones in their philosophy. They were wise enough to combine what was valuable in Hegelianism with what was true in the existing materialist tradition. What they did, in effect, was to take the dialectical part of Hegel's *dialectical* Idealism and the materialistic part of the old, mechanical, *undialectical* Materialism and

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weave them together in the new synthesis of Dialectical Materialism. In so doing they turned Hegel's cosmology right side up by making, in their system, matter instead of mind the basic stuff of the universe. The dynamic Materialism of the Marxists is, as I noted earlier,\* a form of naturalistic Humanism and well illustrates how one philosophy can utilize the sound factors in another philosophy that is opposed to it on a number of the fundamental issues.

A contemporary of Hegel in Germany was Arthur Schopenhauer, pessimist-in-chief of philosophers, who, deliberately scheduling his lectures at the University of Berlin at the same hours as Hegel's, retired in a huff from teaching when he was unable to lure away the latter's students. Schopenhauer minced no words in commenting on his rival: "The height of audacity in serving up pure nonsense, in stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously only been known in madhouses, was finally reached in Hegel, and became the instrument of the most barefaced general mystification that has ever taken place, with a result which will appear fabulous to posterity, and will remain a monument to German stupidity."<sup>78</sup>

Yet Schopenhauer then proceeded, in *The World As Will and Idea*, to present a philosophic system that was just as mystifying as Hegel's, and even more extravagant. For Schopenhauer the world as Idea was the material, external side of existence; the world as Will was the internal,

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\*See pp. 36-37.

dynamic, most fundamental aspect of existence. In place of Hegel's all-embracing cosmic Mind as the basis of everything, Schopenhauer put an all-embracing cosmic Will — a Will definitely malignant, irrational, inhuman. Schopenhauer, then, was one of the very few notable philosophers who was clearly pessimistic in his interpretation of the universe. Thus his philosophy serves as a partial corrective to the false optimism of most philosophers, who have read their hopes and ideals into the structure of reality.

In his own way, however, Schopenhauer was as anthropomorphic as anyone else. For he ascribed to the cosmos as such the human attributes of mind, will and evil. Instead of postulating a good Mind or an all-inclusive God at the very heart of things, he postulated an evil Will, in essence an all-inclusive Devil. The excellent lesson that Schopenhauer's Pan-Satanism teaches is that if we indulge in the pathetic fallacy of imputing to the universe qualities that emerge only in living forms, there is at least as much of a case for imputing the bad qualities as the good.

Friedrich Nietzsche followed Schopenhauer in regarding Will as the activating principle at the heart of the cosmos. Bracing himself with crude interpretations of the Darwinian theory of evolution, he defined this Will as a brutal, assertive and amoral Will to Power. In the human race this Will to Power manifests itself, according to Nietzsche, in the survival and superiority of the strongest, the most ruthless, the most masterful. Nietzsche had an extreme contempt for women. He was militantly opposed



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to democracy and bitterly attacked Christianity, primarily on the grounds that it encourages the democratic way of life. His ideal man was the tough and aristocratic hero recklessly engaging in strife, danger and adventure and boldly setting himself up above all current views of good and bad. In his most brilliant book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wrote, "a good war halloweth any cause."

This fierce philosophy, paradoxically enough produced by a constitutional invalid, later became a stimulus and inspiration for the German Nazis under Adolf Hitler. The Nietzschean Will to Power was equated with the Will to Dominate the World; the Nietzschean stress on biological superiority and eugenics with the right of the master race to rule mankind. Nietzsche's wild and turbulent outpourings carried the individualistic, the romantic, and above all the egotistic note in modern philosophy, especially as evinced in the German versions of Idealism, to a frightening culmination. When philosophers start to take seriously the fantasy that the human mind spins out of its own thought the whole vast panorama of existence, they are embarking on a course of colossal and perilous conceit. And no matter how much they attempt to cover up or escape from the original subjective assumption, they are bound to wind up in the most dangerous extremes.

Yet even Nietzsche, much of whose work appeared in the form of startling epigrams and a kind of prose-poetry, sometimes yields insights and speculations of real Humanist value, such as the vision of an eventual Superman who will surpass present-day man as much as man does the

ape. One shudders at the cruel, egotistic, hard-boiled sort of Superman Nietzsche had in mind, but the idea of a new species beyond man is invigorating. Let us listen for a moment to the voice of Zarathustra himself:

*"I teach you beyond-man. Man is something that shall be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass him?"*

All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and are ye going to be the ebb of this great tide and rather revert to the animal than surpass man? . . .

Beyond-man is the significance of earth. Your will shall say: beyond-man shall be the significance of earth.

I conjure you, my brethren, remain *faithful to earth* and do not believe those who speak unto you of superterrestrial hopes! Poisoners they are whether they know it or not. . . .

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in man is that he is a *transition* and a *destruction*. . . .

I love him who worketh and inventeth to build a house for beyond-man and make ready for him earth, animal, and plant; for thus he willeth his own destruction."<sup>74</sup>

Closely associated with the different types of philosophic and religious Idealism is Pantheism. The God of Pantheism is impersonal and is immanent throughout the material universe; he is not independent of, apart from or

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above the cosmos, but identical with it. Therefore this God is not a Creator or First Cause in the Christian sense, but an indwelling, purposeful, omnipresent Power carrying things onward in the direction of higher values. For the pantheist all matter, from the highest living organisms down to the tiniest inorganic particles, is somehow imbued with spirit or consciousness. In ancient times the Stoics constituted the most important school of pantheists; and in the East Buddhism contains obvious pantheistic elements.

In modern philosophy it was Giordano Bruno, an ex-friar of the Dominican order, who in the sixteenth century re-kindled the pantheist tradition. Bruno thought God could be found in no particular place precisely because he is everywhere — alive and creative throughout the whole infinite universe that is his glorious body. Pantheism has always been a favorite haven for mystics who wish to feel themselves completely absorbed in the All or the One or the Infinite; and for poets who seek to find a pervasive cosmological and aesthetic background for the beauty and grandeur that they see in the natural world. In truth, Pantheism received its consummate expression in the English Nature poets of the early nineteenth century, especially in William Wordsworth. This passage from his *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* is a superb rendering of the pantheistic conception:

“ . . . And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."

The sum and substance of Nature, as interpreted for example by Spinoza, is not equivalent to the God of Pantheism. For that God is a value-bearing Being with a strong upward trend towards what men consider good, and to that extent is anthropomorphic. Spinoza's God, however, is a synonym for Nature and neither promotes nor opposes human values. It is therefore a mistake to classify Spinoza as a pantheist.

The fact that Spinoza constantly used the word *God*, even though he was not a theist, leads us to the general question of the redefinition of religious and philosophic terms. This procedure has gone on throughout the history of thought and is surely legitimate if it remains within sensible bounds. It becomes philosophic double-talk, however, if the redefinition violates the integrity of language; or if it is made in order to avoid an issue or to escape public disfavor. Unfortunately, much of the redefining that has taken place in religion and philosophy has been, it seems, primarily for the purpose of appeasing clerical, academic or political authorities. And there is some indication that even the greatest of philosophers, such as Spinoza and Aristotle, felt constrained, due to the social

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and political pressures of their day, to compromise in the matter of phraseology.

Besides the questionable redefinitions of God that equate him with the totality of Nature, we find today a number of redefinitions that transform God into simply another name for well-known ethical tendencies in men which we all acknowledge to exist and which most of us wish to encourage. For instance, Professor Durant Drake writes that "God is the universal self in each of us, our good will and idealism and intelligence which binds us together and drives us on by inner compulsion toward that ideal life for which in our better moments we strive."<sup>75</sup> Professor Jesse H. Holmes describes God as the unifying element within that moves men to unity in a brotherly world. Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman, who produces a new concept of Deity every time he puts pen to paper, says: "God is that interaction between individuals, groups and ages which generates and promotes the greatest possible mutuality of good."<sup>76</sup> And a Roumanian Humanist by the name of Draghicesco defines God as the more or less complete omnipotence, omniscience and benevolence to which man as a race can approximate in the long run.

It is my opinion that these types of redefinition engender considerable intellectual and philosophic confusion. No matter how carefully such redefinitions are phrased, old meanings and associations necessarily come crowding into the mind in connection with such a blessed and hypnotic name as *God*. Indeed, the very fact that it does possess such deep emotional overtones and can provide a sort of linguistic extreme unction is one of the rea-

sons why men hold on to the term even when its new meaning is as different from its old as black from white. If our supreme aim is to achieve on this earth the good society and the brotherhood of man, together with a near approach to human omniscience and omnipotence, then we shall get much further by describing our goal as precisely that than by befuddling people through labeling it *God*.

An old Chinese proverb avers: "The beginning of wisdom is calling things by their right names." This means in part that for the sake of clarity and truth there must be a line drawn somewhere, beyond which a word cannot properly be used. My own proposal for a minimum definition of God is Mathew Arnold's, "a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," with that Power understood not merely as the magnetic quality of ideas and ideals, but as an active force working for the good independent of human beings and prior to their evolution. This suggestion identifies the differentiating characteristic of God as some type of powerful purpose at the heart of things pushing toward the higher values.

Unless we do insist on limiting in some manner the acceptable meaning of God, it is easy, as Professor Otto maintains, to prove the existence of God by "dilution into vagueness"; through reducing the definition of the term "until it means no more than everyone, even the confessed atheist, will have to admit to exist. Thus the definition of God virtually proves his existence. . . . The word *God* is made to stand for so much that it loses all distinctive meaning. . . . Belief bought at this price costs too much.

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It not only impoverishes the religious life . . . but it tends to dissipate the mental discipline so laboriously and slowly achieved by men.””

The ethics of words is also involved in the many redefinitions of other terms such as *immortality* and *religion* itself. It is often difficult to tell whether a defender of the idea of immortality means continuation of the personality after death, the attainment here and now of a certain “eternal” quality of life and thought, the lasting social influence that a man may have, the handing down of the torch of life through one’s children and descendants, or the indestructibility of the ultimate material elements of the human body. Almost everyone would admit that this last-named type of survival exists and that social and biological immortality are possible. But the real issue is and always has been whether there is a personal, individual, conscious career beyond the grave.

As for the word *religion*, I think that current redefinitions of it are particularly confusing, since they bring under the heading of religion such very different and in some cases positively irreligious phenomena as nationalism, communism and even atheism. Some of these redefinitions would by implication assign the name of religion to any socially organized enterprise that succeeds in winning the devotion and emotions of men. On this basis football, trade unions, political parties, armies and poetry societies all become forms of religious endeavor. One of the broadest contemporary definitions of religion that I have come across occurs in the *Humanist Manifesto* issued by the religious Humanists. This document states that “Re-

ligion consists of those actions, purposes and experiences which are humanly significant." It is evident that the *Manifesto* makes religion cover practically everything that men do.

It is only through this exceedingly loose interpretation of religion that the *Manifesto* group can with any plausibility classify Humanism as a religion. As I said in the first chapter,\* my chief criticism of this school of Humanists is precisely their designation of Humanism as a religion instead of a philosophy. Here again, if we are to maintain sanity, a minimum definition is necessary. And in my judgment it is illegitimate to call any human activity a religion unless there is involved in it at some point or other appeal to, reliance on, or faith in supernatural elements, powers or states of being. Religion, then, is something more than the "quest for abiding values" or "morality touched with emotion."

The religious Humanists, whatever their faults in the use of language, stand with naturalistic Humanism in rejecting the cosmologies and the Gods of Dualism, Idealism and Pantheism. All three of these major philosophies, to one extent or another, interpret the universe in its inner essence or its essential origin as patterned after the model of man himself. They all have their source, no matter how impressive their superstructures or how elaborate their circumlocutions, in a generous measure of wishful thinking. Humanism, on its part, reiterates that Nature as such and considered as a totality has no mind, no pur-

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\* See p. 34.



pose, no preferences, no prevision of the future, no awareness of the past.

### 3. *The Universe of Nature*

Humanism is an *affirmative* philosophy. It is essentially yea-saying. It says: "Yes, this mighty and abundant Nature is our home; in it we ever live and move and have our being. This Nature produced the marvel of life and the race of man. It sustains us with its varied goods and stirs us with its wonderful beauty. Yes, this is a good earth and upon it we can create a worth-while and happy existence for all humanity. Yes, we men possess the glory of mind and the power of freedom; we know the grace of body and the splendor of love. We are grateful for the many simple pleasures that are ours, for the manifold enjoyments which art and culture and science bring. We mortals delight in the sweetness of living rather than lamenting over its brevity. And we rejoice in being able to hand on the torch of life to future generations. Yes, this life is enough; this earth is enough; this great and eternal Nature is enough."

These affirmatives imply a number of negatives. There is no place in the Humanist world-view for either immortality or God in the accepted meanings of those terms. Because I do not wish this book to become too long or too technical, I have not tried to cover all the highly complicated arguments both for and against the existence of a Supreme Being or Cosmic Mind, or to unravel the tortuous spider-webs of metaphysics woven into and

around those arguments. I have indicated, however, the main reasons why Humanism is unable to include a Deity in its theory of the universe and why it contends that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination, created the gods.

The central pillar in the Humanist cosmology or metaphysics is that the underlying and continuing foundation of the universe is not mind or consciousness, but matter in its multiple and changing modes. The truth of this position is not dependent upon the definition of matter in terms of any particular stuff, since science may continue to refine and alter its views of the ultimate constituents of matter. Our position is based simply on the proposition that objective reality — an external world — call it matter, substance, events, electricity or what you will, exists antecedently to and independently of the human mind, a Divine Mind or any other conceivable mind.

The Humanist is, of course, opposed to tricky redefinitions of matter that dissolve it into complete non-materiality; and therefore to the tendency of some thinkers to swing from the former extreme of conceiving matter as altogether inert and without motion to the opposite extreme of conceiving motion as altogether vacuous and without matter or any tangible substance that moves. Even energy in its most rarified aspects, such as X-rays and the electromagnetic waves that make the radio possible, manifests itself in definite particles, or *quanta* in the technical language of science, however infinitesimal in size.

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The universe of Nature shows no favoritism toward man or any other of its creatures. Nature is no more interested in *homo sapiens* than in the tiger, the rat, the extinct Dinosaur or any other form of life; and it is no more interested in living forms as such than in rivers, stars, atoms or any other kind of inanimate phenomenon. As Santayana says of Nature: "Like Polonius's cloud, she will always suggest some new ideal because she has none of her own."<sup>78</sup> . . . If we impute to Cronos any intent to beget his children, we must also impute to him an intent to devour them. . . . The universe can wish particular things only in so far as particular beings wish them; only in its relative capacity can it find things good, and only in its relative capacity can it be good for anything."<sup>79</sup>

Nature's neutrality toward the human race does not mean that man is an alien in this world. For if man were altogether an alien here, it would be impossible to understand how he could have come into being at all. The fact is that we are able to utilize Nature on behalf of human aims, as the whole history of science demonstrates. Of course Nature in its more turbulent and untamed moods, as when it rages forth as an earthquake, a volcano in eruption, a hurricane on sea and land or a great river in flood, can play havoc with its men-creatures and overwhelm their puny strength. But in modern times man has been winning an increasing control over the brute forces of Nature and is often able to foresee, at least, some of the cataclysms that used to take him by surprise.

Nature as manifested upon this earth has provided, though without prevision or intent, conditions sufficiently

favorable to life for that enterprise to flourish and develop here throughout hundreds of millions of years. This Nature has made possible the evolution of the species man and his conquest of our planet from pole to pole. During the very long period of evolutionary progress the mellow, life-encouraging aspects of Nature have on the whole outweighed its harsher, life-threatening aspects. And it is reassuring to feel that beyond our kinship with our fellow-men, which sometimes tends to wear thin, we can have a real sense of kinship with the natural world that is the source of our being and the locus of whatever happiness we attain.

The Humanist view that Nature is indifferent to human aims, that from it all calamities as well as all blessings flow, by-passes the so-called "problem of evil" with which theologians and philosophers have wrestled throughout the centuries. This problem revolves around the question of how an infinitely beneficent and omniscient God could have created a world that has within it so much misery, cruelty and stupidity. The theists have invented many a myth to explain this situation, such as the original sin and fall of man and the existence of a supernatural Satan who fights the Lord and is responsible for bringing evil into the cosmos. In this interpretation evil becomes an important element in the very constitution of things. Another, more sophisticated myth is that evil is nothing but a human illusion, an error of mortal mind; or that it is a good in disguise, coming from God himself, and with the function of testing and strengthening men's souls for eternal life.

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For Humanists, however, there is no deep and inscrutable theological or cosmological problem connected with the presence of evil in experience. For them there is no evil except in relation to human life, strivings and aims. Even disease germs and droughts are evil only as they interfere with human well-being. Most evils are man-made; all evils must be man-solved. There is, in a deep-going philosophical sense, no more a problem as to why evil should exist than as to why good should exist. And philosophers who attribute categories like good and evil, which are applicable only in relation to human conduct and evaluations, to the universe as such are not merely guilty of anthropomorphism, but also involve themselves in new problems that are by the nature of the case insoluble.

The traditional Christian attitude toward evil is, from the Humanist standpoint, itself an evil, because that attitude ascribes to evil a fearful cosmic importance that bears down on men psychologically and has positively bad moral effects. Walter Lippmann's comments are illuminating: "Things are neutral," he affirms, "and evil is a certain way of experiencing them. To realize this is to destroy the awfulness of evil. I use the word 'awful' in its exact sense, and I mean that in abandoning the notion that evil has to be reconciled with a theory of how the world is governed, we rob it of universal significance. We deflate it. . . . It may be said that the effect of the modern approach is to take evils out of the context of superstition. They cease to be signs and portents symbolizing the whole of human destiny and become specific and

distinguishable situations to be dealt with. . . . They are then seen to be of long duration and of short, preventable, curable, or inevitable. As long as all evils are believed somehow to fit into a divine, if mysterious, plan, the effort to eradicate them must seem on the whole futile, and even impious."<sup>80</sup>

Take the matter of physical pain. Many lengthy and learned treatises have been written in an attempt to justify the existence of pain with the justice or kindness of a divine Creator. The orthodox Christian explanation was that no such thing as pain marred the original Garden of Eden and that it came into the world as a result of Adam's sin. If, however, we turn to a scientific analysis of pain in terms of biology and psychology, there is no mystery at all.

The animal ability to experience pain has definite survival value, because it warns the animal, including the species man, of what is dangerous to health and life. If human beings were unable to feel pain, they would be far less capable of coping with disease and warding off death. Pain usually indicates that something is wrong with the organism and that something should be done to cure the trouble. The fact that the reduction of pain to a minimum is one of the important Humanist aims does not contravene this analysis. We have a classic example of religious bewilderment over an artificially conceived problem of pain in the *Book of Job*. Job was a virtuous and holy man who believed in divine retribution for human wickedness and who consequently worked himself up into a very agitated mental state because he found

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it difficult, if not impossible, to understand why he was afflicted with a chronic condition of agonizing boils.

The Humanist runs into no such dilemmas, since he does not expect the universe or any non-human power to care about his pains or his pleasures, his goodness or his good. Humanism takes issue with all philosophic and religious systems based on self-flattery and maintains an even keel by keeping within proper bounds certain categories and distinctions that are perfectly valid as pertaining to the human sphere or some other limited sector of existence. The difference between good and bad is of crucial importance in human living, but that is not a sufficient reason for extending the import of good, or of both good and evil, to the whole cosmos. Again, there is a real distinction between life and non-life, between the animate and inanimate; and between man and all the rest of Nature. These natural dualisms within Nature cannot be denied, but they by no means justify the setting up of a super-Nature in addition to the one we know, which is exactly what the traditional philosophic Dualisms do.

Most misunderstood of all and most likely to lead into philosophic error is the difference between thinking as a process and any other process in either man or Nature. The faculty of reason lifts man so immeasurably above all other things in the world that philosophers have tended to elevate reason itself, apart from man, into a cosmic principle. Thus the theists have held that a Supreme Intelligence is guiding the universe; the Platonic dualists that eternal Ideas are the archtypes, the original models of all

that exists; and the idealists that Mind is the actual stuff of existence.

In opposition to these various misinterpretations of the place of mind in the world, naturalistic Humanism reasserts that mind is a function only of living creatures organized in a certain complex fashion; and that to widen the functioning and locus of mind beyond the activities of such creatures is bad logic and bad philosophy. It is possible that in time experimentation will show that, in addition to man possessing the power of thought, some of the higher animals such as apes or horses can carry through elementary processes of reasoning. This will not alter the basic philosophic situation. Humanists, while they view mind as of far less importance in the universe as a whole than do the supernaturalistic philosophers, ascribe to it considerably more importance on the human level than do those philosophers. For Humanists contend that the use of reason in place of religious faith or intuition or authority is far and away man's best reliance.

Let me repeat here the third point of the Humanist program as I outlined it in the first chapter: "Humanism believes that human thinking is as natural as walking or breathing, that it is indivisibly conjoined with the functioning of the brain, and that ideas, far from existing independently in some separate realm, arise and have reality only when a complex living organism such as man is interacting with its environment and is intellectually active."

It is most essential to note that this statement placing ideas and thinking in their natural context does not mean that ideas themselves, as some materialist philosophers



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have argued, are tiny material particles whirling about inside the brain. It means simply that when ideas, which are non-material meanings expressing the relations between things, occur in human thought, they always do so as functions or accompaniments of physical events or action patterns in the cerebral cortex of the brain. And they are always transmitted in human communication through some sign or symbol that is likewise of a material nature, however attenuated.

Activity within the brain is necessary for a man's having a new idea or recalling an old one. Thinking, physiologists now tell us, even emits electrical charges. When a man has an idea, the idea itself is not stored away inside the cortex as if one were putting something in a box; what is stored away is a certain inner pattern among the multitudinous cerebral nerve-cells. When that pattern, which may become a habit, is re-awakened or re-excited, then the idea or ideas before correlated with it leap into being again. The mind of an individual is the whole system of ideas or meanings he has acquired; but only a small portion of this system comes into use at any one time. The rest functions only as it is elicited by the proper stimulus.

For the individual who is thinking to himself ideas are private and to that extent subjective. But ideas are also objective in that human beings can communicate them to one another and can understand one another's meanings, when these are adequately defined. The objectivity and non-materiality of ideas has been a strong factor in impelling philosophers, especially those of a dualist bent, to set up a realm of ideas or mind apart from and above

Nature. For the Humanist, ideas, whether simple or complex, trifling or noble, true or untrue, are not apart from but are *a part of* Nature. The experience of thinking or having ideas is *distinguishable* from men's other activities, but not existentially *separable*. Since ideas are always the ideas of thinking beings, there could be no ideas at all without such beings. There can be no thought without thinkers. Yet without thinkers there can be the *potentiality* of thought and ideas. Before the species man evolved, Nature possessed the potentiality of producing both thinkers and ideas; but that potentiality did not mean that mind was already real.

Nature, moreover, is susceptible to intellectual analysis; human ideas and the laws of logic are relevant to the world around us and enable men in a remarkable degree to control and work changes upon Nature. This manifest truth that the mental processes of men are germane to Nature, that Nature is understandable, does not imply, as in the idealist tradition, that Nature itself is a mental process or has understanding. It simply implies that thinking as one kind of natural event is closely inter-related with other kinds of natural events and constantly enters into a cause-effect relationship with them. There is nothing mysterious here. The mystery arises when thinking is regarded as a supernatural process and we face the problem of how it can then get across the boundary from super-Nature to Nature and have relevance within the natural world.

One of the chief motives in the philosophic tendency to set up a supernatural sphere of influence in addition

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to Nature itself has been the endeavor to escape from the constant change, precariousness and impermanence of the actual world. To offset these qualities of everyday existence, philosophers have sought to establish a realm where everything of value would be absolutely safe, stable and secure. Thus the Christian heaven enshrined permanently, beyond all danger of decay or blemish, what were considered the major human values. The Platonic realm of eternal Ideas served the same purpose, while the diverse supernaturalist Gods held in their own minds the special values that their respective worshippers cherished. Socially the intent and effect of these compensatory cosmological schemes was usually conservative and helped to preserve certain economic forms in society. As Dr. Howard Selsam has acutely observed, the conservatives try to prevent change in practice and then abolish it *in theory* as well.

Humanism, on the other hand, recognizes change as a fundamental element in the universe and society. Matter itself as the basic stuff of the cosmos is always matter in motion, matter in the form of events of one kind or another. As the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus taught, all things are in ceaseless flux. Solid structures like mountains are only relatively permanent; in time they, too, will be worn away and their substance become part of other phenomena. It is useless to deny change or to attempt to suppress it. Much more fruitful for human beings is the policy of controlling and channeling intelligently the change that is sure to take place.

Another mistake that system-building philosophers,

especially those of the idealist school, have made is to assign to the universe a fictitious unity. The great Cosmic Mind of Idealism binds together the entire universe in a unified totality, an all-encompassing monism. Humanism rejects this conception. We speak loosely of the universe to designate the whole of reality; but when we come to analyze the matter closely, we find that the infinitely diverse world of Nature is a many rather than a one, a multi-verse rather than a uni-verse. Here Humanists in supporting the idea of pluralism instead of monism, have taken a cue from William James, though they disagree with other aspects of his philosophy. James wrote: "Things are 'with' one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything or dominates over everything. . . . The pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than like an empire or a kingdom. . . . Monism, on the other hand, insists that when you come to reality as such, to the reality of realities, everything is present to *everything* else in one vast instantaneous co-implicated completeness."<sup>81</sup>

There are complicated and far-reaching inter-relationships throughout Nature, but there are also constant cross-currents and conflicting forces. There are partial unities, to be sure, but no one, vast, over-arching unity. The different entities that make up the world enter temporarily into identifiable systems, like that of the human body itself; but there is no one system, completely unified, that fuses together tightly all the sub-systems. Through the law of gravity every particle of matter has, of course, a physical effect, however infinitesimal, on every other

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particle of matter in the universe; but this does not entail such a close inter-welding of material units that a universal monism results.

The operation of gravity leaves plenty of scope for the relatively autonomous action of distinct things in their infinite multiplicity. While all material entities are related to one another in respect to gravity, most of them are totally unrelated at any one time to most others in most ways. On the other hand, no entity is independent of all other entities. Every thing has some relations with other things; events overlap, interpenetrate, inter-mesh like the teeth of a cog-wheel. Relationships greatly vary, as Dewey makes clear: "Some things are relatively insulated from the influence of other things; some things are easily invaded by others; some things are fiercely attracted to conjoin their activities with those of others. Experience exhibits every kind of connexion from the most intimate to mere external juxtaposition."<sup>82</sup>

No matter how far back, in our analysis, we push the cause-effect sequences of the universe, we are certain to discover a plurality of event-streams that can be accurately described only in terms of a plurality of principles. There is no *one* event that started the universe going, and in fact no beginning at all, unless we postulate a God as a First Cause or Creator. For Humanism matter, the dough of existence, is ever active in individual, discrete forms. Individuality in this sense is an ultimate principle of the universe. The constant activity in the world radiates from many different centers. And the radical pluralism of Nature makes impossible the absolute and uni-

versal determinism that certain religions and philosophies have expounded.

This pluralism also indicates that what we call *chance* is not merely a word for expressing subjective human ignorance of cause and effect, but that there is such a thing as *objective* chance existing outside of and regardless of the human mind. This idea, too, was a favorite one of James and goes back as far as Aristotle and Epicurus in ancient Greece. There are separate event-streams or causal series within which strict determinism rules; but the interjunction of two or more independently initiated event-streams at a special point in time and space is frequently a matter of pure chance or contingency. Chance does not *do* anything; it has no causal efficacy. It is the name we give to a specific type of occurrence.

The concept of chance does not contradict the concept of scientific law. For scientific laws are the expression of if-then sequences: if  $H_2O$ , then water; if water at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, then boiling water. But Nature does not guarantee or issue a command that at any particular time and place two parts of hydrogen will merge with one part of oxygen or that water will reach a temperature of 212. Nature proceeds according to necessity only in the sense that when a certain *if* is actualized, a certain *then* will follow. A scientific law always refers to a system of events that is to a greater or lesser degree isolated; events may and do intrude from outside any such determinate system and prevent the occurrence of a particular if-then, cause-effect sequence that otherwise would have occurred. In the Humanist cosmology both necessity (or determinism

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or mechanism) and chance (or contingency or fortuity) are fundamental and permanent characteristics of the universe; and neither necessity nor chance can ever swallow up the other.

Professor Sterling P. Lamprecht of Amherst<sup>8</sup> sheds useful light on these points: "Contingency is often regarded as an alternative to mechanism. In fact it is a correlative aspect of Nature's ways. In our world we find that forces, once initiated, work out to their inevitable consequences. But the initiation of forces is not itself decreed. The laws of Nature are statements of the mechanical phase of Nature. They state the uniformities of correlation and sequence which events manifest. The laws of Nature are not, however, dictates that compel procedure — they are not statutes or prescriptive enactments. The presence of contingency is not evident at a glance because it is not effectively exploited by inanimate agents. Inanimate agents react to the actual stimulus of the moment; they react, it might be said, to the superficial. Intelligent agents react to more than the actual stimulus; they react to the potentialities of the actual. And these potentialities are always plural. . . . The alternative possibilities were present in Nature from the start even though they received no notable exploitation until intelligent creatures came to pass."<sup>83</sup>

Humanism takes the position that human life, like Nature as a whole, is shot through with contingency. When chance manifests itself in human affairs, we frequently describe it as accident or coincidence or luck — good luck or bad luck. Take this report from the New

York *Herald Tribune* of May 28, 1944: "A ten-pound slab of ornamental stone fell from the sixteenth floor of the Hotel Ansonia, Broadway and Seventy-third Street, at 4 P.M. yesterday and struck Miss Helen Beebe, hotel telephone operator, on the head, killing her instantly. . . . Miss Beebe had just quit her post at the hotel's telephone exchange and was walking south on the west side of Broadway when the stone struck her." That accident was extraordinarily bad luck for Miss Beebe and a good example of objective chance. For it represented the sudden conjunction of two presumably independent causal series, of two event-sequences with no common, relevant cause behind them. The approximately four hundred persons in the United States who are struck dead by lightning each year are also victims of chance in the form of bad luck.

On the other hand, if you are walking along any street, road, or path and unexpectedly find a purse containing \$100, that is an illustration of objective chance in the form of good luck. Under certain circumstances, however, such a happening would not be an instance of objective chance, as, for example, if a kind-hearted uncle of means had purposely dropped the purse where he knew you would shortly pass. Chance events are an everyday occurrence in the life of the average active human being. Men often go to considerable pains to guard themselves against the possible bad results of chance happenings, as when they take out fire insurance, although I do not mean to imply that every outbreak of fire is a matter of chance. Many of the events that were formerly considered miracles were instances of chance. And it is interesting that contempo-



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rary law should classify as "acts of God" extraordinary and unpredictable events in Nature that occur without human intervention, many of which also properly come under the heading of chance.

An old argument against the existence of objective chance is that if there were an all-knowing mind in the universe, that mind could predict, from its knowledge of the complete state of affairs throughout the cosmos at any moment, everything that would happen everywhere, down to the minutest detail, for all future time. On the face of it this argument may have an air of plausibility, but it is fallacious in that the very assumption of an all-knowing mind amounts to an assumption of the deterministic, anti-chance thesis that has to be proved. Such a mind could have an all-embracing pre-view of the future only if all existing entities gave rise to cause-effect sequences that swept unendingly ahead in rigid uniformities undisturbed by any chance encounters or deviations.

In short, universal omniscience, as distinct from specific scientific predictions concerning a limited or isolated segment of existence, definitely implies universal determinism. The Humanist claim that the existence of objective chance rules out universal determinism constitutes, therefore, another argument against the omniscient Gods of traditional supernaturalism. That the Humanists are not merely erecting a straw man here is easily seen in the fact that certain religions of inexorable determinism, like Calvinism and Mohammedanism, recognize and indeed insist upon the deterministic character of their supernatural God. God as pure determinism also appears in

certain religious forms centering around human crises like that of death. Thus the well-known Protestant ritual includes the words: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away." And death notices will sometimes begin: "Whereas God in his infinite wisdom has taken our dearly beloved. . . ."

It follows from our chain of reasoning that if an omniscient, omnipotent, all-determining God exists or if the material universe in itself adds up to complete determinism, then there can be no real human freedom. For in either case all human actions, decisions and thoughts are pre-determined just like all other events. The great cosmic juggernaut rolls on and nobody can alter its course in the slightest. The Humanist proposition that both pluralism and chance are characteristics of Nature is of portentous significance for our analysis of the nature of man, because that proposition opens the door to freedom of choice for human beings.

Personal freedom of choice means the capacity of conscious men to make real decisions in situations where significant alternatives exist. Obviously physical, economic, social and other factors always condition and limit human choices. Our mental and physical inheritance, the extent and type of our education, our income and kind of job, in fact, our total environment past and present, all influence our current behavior. By no means all of our acts are free. Many belong to the category of the unconscious or automatic; many are strictly determined by the deeds, habits and environmental factors of our individual pasts. It is my opinion, however, that in a large proportion of

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our conscious actions there is an element of indeterminateness at the moment of choosing; and a decisive residue of freedom in the act of willing or volition at that moment which the weight of the past, great as it is, does not offset.

Let us take a simple example to illustrate these remarks. Suppose you are going to Europe on a six-day steamer and want to get some good books to read on board ship. You allot for this purpose \$8.00 from your budget for the trip and stop at your favorite bookstore the afternoon before you are to sail. There are several hundred books on display from which you can choose. You are limited, in the first place, to these, because of the shortness of time. In the second place, you are limited in an economic sense to purchases within your self-imposed total of \$8.00. Also long-established reading habits, your particular fields of interest and what you have seen or heard about recently published books will enter into your final decisions.

All this to the contrary notwithstanding, I hold that you are able to exercise genuine freedom of choice in picking out two light novels and a detective story instead of a much-touted study of history, over 600 pages long and costing \$5.00, and a serious work on the international situation predicting the inevitability of a third world war; or in selecting a more mixed assortment consisting of one novel, an analysis of the coming economic crisis and a thin volume of poems. You are even free to choose an old classic such as Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, which you

have always been meaning to read, and a book on modern philosophy.

Human freedom always functions, as in the above instance, within a certain frame of reference, within definite boundaries. Nevertheless, however circumscribing those boundaries may be in a given situation, there almost invariably remains leeway for some free choice. Under a strict dictatorship the average citizen's range of alternative actions is not nearly so broad as under a true democracy. Yet regardless of what sort of political system prevails in your country, there is one exceedingly important moral choice you can always make. You can defy the governmental authorities. You can say, "No, I will not keep silent. No, I will not obey." You can deliberately choose the path to a concentration camp or to death itself for the sake of your principles. Throughout history innumerable individuals, known and unknown, have given up their lives rather than give up their convictions. It is difficult to believe that in such cases free personal choice does not play a decisive role.

One of the most significant types of choice men can make is to take advantage of established scientific if-then laws by initiating a specific event from which a certain desired result will follow. If we heat water to the requisite 212 degrees, it will boil; and we can cook various foods in it or utilize the steam for various purposes. Thus in a multitude of ways human beings make excellent use of a determinism of *means*; it is in this sense that a knowledge of necessity leads to increasing human freedom and control. It is my contention that a person is ordinarily

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free to choose when and how he will put scientific determinism into effect, except where it is clearly beyond his power to bring about the required condition or cause.

Human freedom of choice is inextricably bound up with the capacity of thought. In most cases, when confronted by a problem, we do not have to take action instantly. We are able to propose to ourselves various hypothetical solutions and reason out the implications of each one. As Professor George H. Mead of Chicago University has described the process: "It is the entrance of the alternative possibilities of future response into the determination of present conduct in any given environmental situation, and their operation, through the mechanism of the central nervous system, as part of the factors or conditions determining present behavior, which decisively contrasts intelligent conduct or behavior with reflex, instinctive and habitual conduct or behavior — delayed reaction with immediate reaction."<sup>84</sup>

In other words, the enterprise of thinking, with its manipulation of ideas that symbolize things and events, enables men to stand aside temporarily from the flux of existence or at least that sector of it about which they are thinking. Meanwhile, during a typical unit of reflection, they examine imaginatively and mentally rehearse the different possibilities that are open to them, and finally choose the possibility that they wish to see actualized. It is the ever plural potentialities in Nature that give human beings their opportunity to make choices that count among alternatives that are real.

The determinist answer here is that the different solu-

tions to a problem we suggest to ourselves and the reasoning we perform regarding them are completely determined by our past thinking. The cause-effect sequences in our brains are just as determining, just as inescapable, as anywhere else in Nature. If we produce a genuinely new thought, that, too, follows from a definite cause-effect pattern in the cerebral cortex. The human will is simply the dynamic urge to carry out wishes and ideas that have become part of our being through the impact of the total cause-effect necessities both within us and without us. True freedom, according to this view, is the capacity to act according to one's true character, to be altogether one's self, to be *self*-determined and not subject to outside coercion.

This doctrine deserves careful consideration due to the intelligence and consistency with which it has been formulated. The majority of naturalist and materialist philosophers have supported it. But I do not think it is a view to which Humanists should give their assent. The sounder position is that we human beings possess the freedom "to modify and supplement our past by a spontaneous effort not predetermined by that past;"<sup>85</sup> that we are free either to improve upon that past or to fall below its standards. Most men, I am convinced, have an unmistakable feeling at the final moment of significant choice that they are making a free decision, that they can really decide which one of two or more roads to follow. This feeling does not in itself amount to knowledge, yet cannot be disregarded by philosophers and psychologists.

The deterministic philosophies, like certain other world-

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views, have provided a psychological escape for harassed man. For they have set up a supreme authority that either automatically or otherwise arrives at and enacts all decisions down to the very last detail of human conduct, and so relieves men from the trouble of solving their own difficulties and from worrying over a future whose course is already predestined. Yet even those who have purported to believe in some form of fatalism or universal necessity have *acted* as if they did have freedom of choice; and this indicates, in my opinion, that the dynamic of freedom runs so deep in human nature that no mere theories can succeed in negating it. In any case a passive attitude toward life seems to be more a function of hot weather and tropical climate, undernourishment and bad health, than of deterministic cosmologies.

The common-sense reaction of the average person is surely that what he does or does not do makes a real difference in the outcome of his affairs. The Humanist pushes this idea further by asserting that human thinking in particular makes a difference. The theoretical determinist gets himself into a peculiar quandary here. For he is compelled to admit that his own determinist philosophy and all his brilliant arguments in favor of it, including every phrase, word and punctuation mark, were from way back bound to emerge in the exact form that they finally took; and that the iron law of cause and effect likewise led me inevitably to my conclusions and statements concerning freedom of choice. This is a self-stultifying position; if it were true, man would be a species of robot.

Cosmic determinism also robs the concept of potentiality of most of its meaning by reading back present actuality into the primordial state of things. For the determinist position is that at any one moment in the state of the universe every last thing that happens in the future is then and there somehow contained or implied. Thus there has existed only one universal potentiality throughout all time, namely the potentiality of the one actuality that necessarily occurs. There are no plural or alternate possibilities; each thing, as well as things as a whole, has only one possible line of development. The present unfolds from the past as automatically as a motion picture is projected onto the screen from a roll of film.

One reason for the specious appeal of absolute determinism is a rather common misunderstanding of the principle of cause and effect. Thus intelligent people, and even some philosophers, conceive of the present as merely the effect of preceding causes and neglect the fact that the present is itself an active cause. Every effect becomes a cause in its turn. The *present* present, as the spearhead of activity in the world, is always working upon, transforming or conserving what has been handed down to it by *former* presents that are now past. The past *as* past has no efficacy; it is dead and gone. It is efficacious only through the continuum of cause and effect carrying on from one present to the next. Everything that exists, including the whole vast aggregate of inanimate matter, exists only as an event or events taking place at this instant moment which is now. To exist means universally to be a form or quality of activity in some temporal present.



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The activity of the irrevocable and irreversible past builds the foundations upon which the immediate present operates. It establishes certain limits, potentialities and conditions. The past always *conditions* present activity; and present activity conditions the events of the future. But conditioning is not the same as determining. And each dynamic present in its onward sweep creates fresh patterns of existence, maintains other patterns and destroys still others.

The past and future are both imaginative concepts. They assume, however, the status of concrete present existence upon our calendars where time is represented in terms of space and is therefore *misrepresented*. Our calendars preserve the old notion of the world being *in* time and moving through it. We know, on the contrary, as the Theory of Relativity has helped to make plain, that time is a quality of activity or process, a relationship between events. Professor Woodbridge further clarifies the situation: "Nothing whatever goes from the past through the present into the future. We can not make such a statement intelligible. For 'to go' from the past to the future is not like going from New York to Boston. Boston is already there to go to, but the future is not anywhere to go to. And New York is there to leave, but the past is not anywhere to leave."<sup>86</sup>

The movement of time, then, is not a movement of anything *from* the past *into* the future; it is the passage from one present to another present, from one state of actuality to another. Human beings and their actions, like everything else, constitute the advancing front, the surging

crest of an on-going movement that never stops. Living, doing, thinking men, together with the natural forces under their control, are an unceasing *wave of the present*. And that wave, however conditioned and limited by the past, possesses an initiative and freedom that enable it to push forward into new territory and to display genuine novelty.

Another error in the deterministic interpretation of human nature is that it falls into the genetic fallacy of viewing men's actions merely in terms of causal antecedents. But each individual thing that exists is what it *does* rather than what it is caused by; its antecedents cannot negate its specific character and activities. The lovely blossoming of a flower is just as real as the lowly roots from which the flower sprang. Water is caused by the interaction of two parts of hydrogen and one of oxygen, but water behaves in a way that you could never deduce from a study of hydrogen and oxygen separately. It would be absurd to claim that water cannot run downhill because neither hydrogen nor oxygen does. With water there emerge new qualities and kinds of behavior quite dissimilar to those of its causal antecedents. The opposite view repeats the old mistake of supposing that there must be an inclusive similarity between a cause and its effect, so that all the properties of an effect somehow pre-exist in the cause. Furthermore, every single phenomenon of Nature possesses a certain irreducible individuality that is at least as important a factor in its behavior as the prior causes that bring it into being or the external causes that later affect it.

Throughout Nature and the realm of life different levels of organization have come into being that carry with them fresh attributes and possibilities. And I suggest that in man, who represents the highest level of organization which we know, there has appeared the new quality of freedom as well as the new quality of thought. The existence of freedom of choice cannot be *deduced* from anything that has existed previously. More particularly it cannot be deduced from the law of causation, as many a philosopher has learned to his chagrin. Human freedom is perhaps one of those categories the reality of which cannot be proved, but must be assumed. It is, however necessarily grounded in natural processes such as the power of preference and adaptability that all things, both animate and inanimate, possess. Freedom results from the extension of these qualities of preference and adaptability onto a higher plane by complex animal forms.

To be perfectly frank, I am not altogether satisfied with the analysis of individual human freedom that I have presented; and I submit it more tentatively than any other section of this book. No doubt many Humanists will disagree with my position. Yet neither Naturalism nor Materialism nor any other philosophy has so far dealt adequately with this fundamental issue. The Marxist philosophy of Dialectical Materialism raises, in its theory of history, a related question when it advances the idea that the triumph of the proletariat and socialism is inevitable. While the Marxists deny that they are determinists or fatalists and in practice are among the most militant of

men, their official theory of inevitability smacks of a determinist approach that is unacceptable.

There is some reason for believing that Marx himself, when, for instance, he wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that the victory of the working class is "inevitable," was using the term in a metaphorical or hortatory sense to express unyielding determination and to cheer on the workers of the world. Social scientists, whether Marxist or otherwise, can doubtless discern clear trends in the realm of social and economic affairs; but it is extremely dubious whether they have the intellectual right to characterize any such trends by an absolute term like "inevitable."

The fact that Marxists, besides being materialists and having a world-view similar in general to that of Humanists and naturalists, are also political radicals poses the problem of whether a particular cosmological outlook logically leads to any special socio-economic viewpoint such as that of conservatism, liberalism or radicalism. My answer is decidedly in the negative. We cannot with certainty deduce any individual's socio-economic attitude from his attitude toward the universe, or vice versa. Today many Christian supernaturalists are plainly radical from a social standpoint and freely quote the Bible, especially the New Testament, to support their opinions. On the other hand, many anti-supernaturalists are conservative or even reactionary in their position on political and social issues.

During the French Revolution Robespierre, one of the most radical leaders, was quite rough on atheists and asserted: "Atheism is aristocratic. The idea of a Supreme

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Being who watches over oppressed innocence and punishes triumphant crime is essentially the idea of the people."<sup>87</sup> It would be possible, furthermore, for leftists to re-work the idea of immortality so that heaven would be considered the due reward of those who fought for socialism, and hell the deserved destination of all capitalists. Despite these considerations, the history of thought shows that on the whole those who have been prone to give up traditional ideas in religion and philosophy have likewise been prone to break away from traditionalism in socio-economic affairs. There is undoubtedly a psychological connection here, but no binding logical one.

To sum up the Humanist theory of the universe, we can say that, taking the facts and implications of modern science as its point of departure, yet not unmindful of the claims of religious and artistic genius, it definitely repudiates the supernaturalist or anthropomorphic bias running through most philosophies of the past. For naturalistic Humanism the universe of Nature is all that exists; and man's greater good within this Nature is man's be-all and end-all. This-earthly human achievement is a worthwhile goal in itself and not a means to salvation in another life. Whatever salvation man can find from evil must be in this world.

The great supernaturalist and idealist philosophies have always insisted on some sort of cosmic guarantee for the ultimate triumph of man or his values; they have postulated the existence of a favoring Providence or a great Friend behind phenomena guiding the complicated affairs of mankind to an inevitably successful conclusion.

Humanism, however, never loads the dice by reading the actualization of its ideals into the stars, the drift of history or a Divine Mind that underwrites the future. Man stands alone in a universe that does not care. Yet he can be proud that in the whole vast cosmos he may be the highest form of being that exists and is, at the very least, one of the highest. Confronted with the measuring rod of value, the immensities of time and space shrink mightily when compared with a single human mind.

Humanism is a philosophy for mature people and grows increasingly influential with the maturity of the race. It is honest and realistic in holding that man cannot romantically expect that his story is necessarily going to have a happy ending; it is tough-minded and firm-hearted in teaching that we should not unsportingly demand any advance promise of victory. But the Humanist philosophy, though knowing that man may lose and lose permanently, is convinced that he has the ability and the intelligence and the spirit to win through. While it diminishes our cosmic pretensions, it augments our earthly hopes.

So Humanism encourages men to face life buoyantly and bravely, relying upon their own freedom and reason to fashion a noble destiny in a future that is open.

#### 4. *The Appreciation of Nature*

The Humanist tenet that Nature constitutes the universality of existence does not detract from the appreciation of natural beauty and indeed should sharpen it. Humanism gives ample scope to those reactions of awe and

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wonder that so many men have experienced when they gaze upon the unending array of stars, see a sun-streaked waterfall hurtling over a high precipice or view the sweep and splendor of mountains, sea and sky. Acute consciousness of the infinite loveliness in the external world can offset to a considerable degree any sense of human loneliness or insignificance to which the naturalistic, humanistic cosmology may give rise. There is a wealth of evidence to show that a keen responsiveness to natural beauty not only evokes in human beings experiences of the most intense and pleasurable kind, but also arouses in them a feeling of profound kinship and oneness with Nature in its changing moods.

Here again I do not think that either of Humanism's allied philosophies, Naturalism and Materialism, has done justice to a theme that certainly is of importance for any well-rounded philosophy. There is very little in the writing of contemporary naturalists and materialists that develops the possibilities of Nature as an aesthetic object or that indicates the philosophic relevance of Nature appreciation. It seems to me that naturalists and materialists, in their perennial struggle against cosmologies that erect false barriers between man and Nature, have overlooked or under-stressed certain aspects of the wholly natural distinction between man and non-human Nature.

In general it is the poets who have best described the multitudinous patterns of color, sound and motion in the natural world and who have given most eloquent voice to the effect of Nature's beauty and grandeur upon the

human heart and mind.\* Among the poets of the English language it is, in my judgment, the Nature poets of the early nineteenth century, notably Keats and Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth, whose achievement is greatest in these respects. And of them all, Wordsworth stands out as preeminent in mastery of expression and variety of image. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I prefer to quote certain passages from Lord Byron that exemplify both virtues and defects in his attitude toward Nature. Since there was little of a religious note in Byron's work, he frequently wrote in a naturalistic vein about absorbing the beauty of Nature into one's inmost being and of mingling in harmonious unity with the universe. Thus in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

"Are not the mountains, waves and skies, a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?  
Is not the love of these deep in my heart? . . .  
I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me; and to me  
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum  
Of human cities torture. . . . The soul can flee  
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain  
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

"Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;  
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;  
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime extends,  
He had the passion and the power to roam;

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\*I am not attempting to cover here the extensive contributions made by modern prose writers, landscape painters and composers in the evolution of Nature appreciation.



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The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,  
Were unto him companionship; they spake  
A mutual language, clearer than the tome  
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake  
For Nature's pages glass'd by sunbeams on the lake."<sup>88</sup>

Now Byron, who during much of his career felt himself to be an outcast, was also, as these lines indicate, constantly thinking of Nature as a refuge from human society and from the hubbub of urban existence. While boredom and intolerance have not yet been eradicated from human intercourse and while the fury and clatter of cities have enormously increased since Byron's day, I do not conceive of the normal appreciation of Nature in terms of escape from either men or machines. Rather it is an aesthetic pleasure, a spiritual delight and a simple, rewarding way of recreation. Like any other kind of recreation, it of course often takes the form of a temporary withdrawal from the concerns of everyday life. For the mentally depressed or distracted, Nature appreciation can sometimes serve as a valuable therapy; it induces tranquillity and restores the sick soul.

Another point about Byron, as typified by the second stanza quoted, was his preference for the wild, the remote and untamed in Nature. These melodramatic aspects of the natural world have their own appeal and can indeed be most fascinating, but in the objective estimation of aesthetic value there is no reason for promoting them to a special position. The scope of natural beauty is as wide as the range of beautiful objects, large or small, near or far, wild or cultivated, static or in motion. Further-

more, in our philosophy of appreciation there certainly must be a place for the experience of beauty in Nature merging with that of human creation, as when we view the bridges of New York or San Francisco against their background of water, highland and sky; or look upon London in the shining splendor of the morning sun, as described by Wordsworth in his sonnet *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*.

My reservations as to Byron's treatment of Nature lead to the general observation that all the chief Nature poets of his period belonged to the Romantic school of literature and exemplified to one degree or another the obvious shortcomings of the Romantic movement. They were all inclined to over-state the case for external Nature, to idealize it in a manner reminiscent of Rousseau and to over-emphasize the good consequences for human character and conduct of closeness to Nature and sensitivity to its beauty. Certain professional philosophers have made the same mistake. For example, Immanuel Kant stated: "I maintain that to take an immediate interest in the Beauty of Nature (not merely to have taste in judging it) is always a mark of a good soul."<sup>89</sup> And Schopenhauer wrote: "A beautiful view is therefore a cathartic of the mind, as music, according to Aristotle, is of the feeling, and in its presence one will think most correctly."<sup>90</sup>

The thoroughly humanistic appreciation of Nature that I am suggesting does not share in these exaggerations and sentimentalities of Romanticism. It decidedly does not set up the non-human world as somehow more worthy of attention than man or as aesthetically superior to art. Nor

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does it indulge in the pantheistic and sometimes supernaturalistic overtones which Wordsworth, especially, was prone to bring into his poetry. So far as later British poets are concerned, both Swinburne and Meredith produced excellent Nature poetry that adhered closely to the Humanist approach.

Turning to America, we find much first-rate Nature poetry in Bryant and Whittier, Emerson and Whitman, with transcendental or idealistic influences markedly present in the work of the latter two. Without stopping to analyze these nineteenth-century American writers, I want to come direct to a contemporary poet who has given expression to a clear and uncompromising Humanist viewpoint. I refer to the late Arthur Davison Ficke and his fine sonnet-sequence *Tumultuous Shore*, which seems to me a notable instance of humanistic responsiveness, warm yet objective, to natural beauty. Consider these lines:

“And if he die? He for an hour has been  
Alive, aware of what it is, to be.  
The high majestic hills, the shining sea,  
He has looked upon, and meadows golden-green.  
The stars in all their glory he has seen.  
Love he has felt. This poor dust that is he  
Has stirred with pulse of inward liberty,  
And touched the extremes of hope, and all between.  
Can the small pain of death-beds, can the sting  
Of parting from the accustomed haunts of earth,  
Make him forget the bounty of his birth  
And cancel out his grateful wondering

That he has known exultance and the worth  
Of being himself a song the dark powers sing?"<sup>91</sup>

In the field of philosophy itself Lucretius' superb descriptions in *On the Nature of Things* still remain the outstanding example of naturalistic Nature appreciation. There is hardly a page throughout the entire volume that does not make reference to the ever-changing forms and qualities of the natural world. Of course the great philosopher-poet of antiquity included in his descriptive sweep almost everything that we now assign to the realm of natural science. I am not urging modern philosophers to imitate Lucretius in this respect. Nonetheless, in his approach to Nature and in his constant allusions to its more beauteous aspects, he established a pattern that is most pertinent for present-day philosophers and their writing of readable work.

One of the most impressive sections in Lucretius is that part in which he treats of great meteorological phenomena and extraordinary telluric manifestations. To a large degree his descriptions of earthquakes, lightning, thunderbolts, hurricanes, volcanoes and the Nile in flood come under the heading of what Edmund Burke called the sublime. In depicting these turbulent moods of a Nature mighty and unrestrained, Lucretius makes us feel such a power and a glory in it all that we are ready to cry out: "Though Nature slay us, yet is it ever most marvelous and beautiful!"<sup>92</sup>

Some years ago I had this precise feeling one summer's afternoon when I was walking along the Hudson River at

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the base of the Palisades during a brief but ferocious thunderstorm. The sky was inky black and poured forth torrents of wind-swept rain in slanting patterns; violent thunder-claps reverberated among the cliffs, and lightning flashes near and far lighted up the river in zigzag configurations. I had that exhilarating sensation of witnessing an awe-inspiring spectacle and knowing at the same time that there was a chance, however infinitesimal, of my being struck dead in my tracks at any moment.

As Lucretius tells us in a memorable passage:

“ . . . At such a time the densèd clouds  
So mass themselves through all the upper air  
That we might think that round about all murk  
Had parted forth from Acheron and filled  
The mighty vaults of sky — so grievously,  
As gathers thus the storm-clouds’ gruesome night,  
Do faces of black horror hang on high —  
When tempest begins its thunderbolts to forge. . . .  
. . . . . Then the thunderbolt,  
Now ripened, so to say, doth suddenly  
Splinter the cloud, and the aroused flash  
Sweeps onward, lumining with forky light  
All places round. And followeth anon  
A clap so heavy that the skiey vaults,  
As if asunder burst, seem from on high  
To engulf the earth.”<sup>93</sup>

The experience of finding Nature full of wonder and fascination even when it directly threatens human life

leads us to the threshold of religious mysticism. But it is not necessary to enter that door. Instead I would take the view that not a few of the reports of religious mystics can be legitimately interpreted in terms of a perfectly normal, this-worldly mysticism stemming from a deep sensitivity for the beauties of our natural environment. Fortunately, one does not need to be a professional mystic in order to know at first-hand the meaning of what I am loosely calling "normal mysticism." Professor James H. Leuba quotes the following from a "mystic" who might be any one of us:

"Once when walking in the wild woods and in the country, in the morning under the blue sky, the sun before me, the breeze blowing from the sea, the birds and flowers around me, an exhilaration came to me that was heavenly — a raising of the spirit within me through perfect joy. Only once in my life have I had such an experience of heaven."<sup>94</sup> Similar statements are a fundamental motif in a classic such as Thoreau's *Walden*. For example: "Sometimes in a summer morning. . . I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise to noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumbucks, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiselessly through the house, until by the sun falling in at my western window, or the noise of some traveler's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time."<sup>95</sup>

Now most nature-lovers are not literary people who make records of their experiences. But the fact is that many ordinary persons who in the love of Nature hold

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communion with her visible and other forms may in this process lose themselves in a veritable ecstasy of aesthetic delight, so that they forget the passage of time and are lifted out of and beyond the regular flow of day-to-day existence. As an element in responsiveness to Nature this can happen in a variety of ways, many of them of a familiar kind, such as walking along a sandy beach upon which ocean waves are breaking, treading a pine-needed forest path with leafy boughs rustling over-head, smelling a fragrant violet or rose in a formal garden, watching the sun go down in a cloud-filled sky or looking out upon the big swirling flakes of a snowstorm.

A contributing factor to this sort of aesthetic and spiritual experience is often simple, healthy activity, in fresh air and under the open sky, that stirs the blood and causes a pervasive glow of physical well-being. Certain outdoor sports like sailing and skiing are especially calculated to stimulate the senses and to afford opportunity for the enjoyment of Nature. Emerson was right when he remarked: "Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous!"<sup>96</sup> Assuming that one has a desire for the appreciation of the external world, the only essential equipment is sound and acute senses, particularly a pair of good eyes. Actually any normal person can participate in such apprehension of the beautiful. And in the common man an active love of Nature inspires the unwritten but deep-felt poetry of the heart.

Yet elementary and easily accessible as are so many of the forms of natural beauty, a specific urge or inclination to appreciate Nature is not something innate in the

individual or native to human society. In the Christian West the widespread appreciation of Nature for its own sake came only in modern times. The Old Testament writers displayed an occasional awareness of the beauty of Nature; and in the *Book of Psalms* this consciousness was quite marked. Their mention of natural phenomena, however, was primarily for the purpose of demonstrating the power and majesty of Jehovah: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."<sup>97</sup> For the ancient Hebrews, as for the Christians of later eras, inanimate Nature was chiefly significant because of what it manifested about the Creator.

The ancient Greeks, on the other hand, with their developed feeling for the beautiful in every sphere of existence, deeply appreciated as such the sensuous qualities of the external world. Their complex mythology interfered but little with this appreciation, since their pagan deities were associated rather pleasantly with landscape and Nature. Also in China and India the established religions have been more favorable than Christianity to the love of Nature. For they have encouraged the people of those countries to consider the beauty of Nature as itself divine rather than, like traditional Christianity, to interpret it as merely revealing the divinity of a personal, transcendent God or as symbolizing the truths of supernatural salvation.

Needless to say, the Christian interpretation of Nature has not prevented magnificent descriptions of natural beauty such as occur in St. Francis of Assisi's *Cantic of Brother Sun* or Joseph Addison's famous hymn *Creation*.



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Yet as late as 1929, concern over unduly encouraging Nature worship was one of the reasons why the Protestant Episcopal Church, in its official revision of the Book of Common Prayer, changed the King James version of the 121st Psalm, first verse, from "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" to "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; whence cometh my help?" Turning the second clause here into a question turns the second verse of the Psalm into a clear answer: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

A further bar to the direct and simple love of Nature in the West "was the conversion, by early Christian teachers, of the ancient gods of wood and spring into evil spirits, and of Pan into the Devil. Whereas in China the holy men retired to the mountains to be closer to the divine beauty of Nature, in the West hermits who withdrew to 'deserts' were believed to be peculiarly subject to the forces of evil. Thus the forests and mountains and rivers of Europe were not only considered vaguely sinful, but positively dangerous."<sup>98</sup> This association of Nature with sin was also stimulated by the interpretation that Christian theologians gave to the consequences of Adam's fall and the great flood as recounted in the Bible.

The more orthodox Christian view was that prior to Adam's transgression and the later deluge the earth was a perfect paradise and that it became far less attractive and beautiful after these disastrous events. As Calvin put the matter, God made the mighty waters "overflow all parts of the earth, that wherever man should look, the atrocity of his sin should meet his eyes."<sup>99</sup> Luther insisted

that "we must speak of the whole Nature since its corruption as an entirely altered face of things: a face which Nature has assumed, first by means of sin, and secondly, by the awful effects of the universal Deluge. . . . All creatures, yes, even the sun and the moon, have as it were put on sackcloth. They were all originally 'good,' but by sin and the curse they have become defiled and noxious."<sup>100</sup>

A later and influential school of thought, culminating in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and including the English poet and divine, John Donne, claimed that originally the earth was an unblemished sphere, smooth as an egg, "with not a wrinkle, scar or fracture." The flood shattered and crumpled this state of perfection and resulted in allegedly ugly and undesirable phenomena such as seas and islands, valleys and mountains. In the passionate controversy that raged over this theory, mountains became the center of attention and were variously interpreted as "symbols of sin and decay, monstrous excrescences, pits and pock-marks in the fair face of Nature."<sup>101</sup> All mountains, it was freely predicted, would be leveled on the Day of Judgment, in conformity with Isaiah's well-known prophecy that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

The important point is that in the Christian tradition Nature as existing upon this earth was considered to have become, owing to man's terrible wickedness, a jagged, unshapely, repellent ruin in comparison with the original paradise, or at least much less lovely and well-propor-

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tioned. This attitude toward the environment was unquestionably a factor in the common man's attribution of evil and fearfulness to the natural world and in holding back a proper appreciation of its beauty. Of course other elements, especially those connected with the material condition of life, played a significant role in this situation.

Lack of understanding of and scientific control over the more massively threatening forces in Nature, such as storms, floods, earthquakes and droughts, no doubt hindered men from comprehending the beauty of the natural world as a whole. Preoccupation with opening up the wilderness, the general pressures of pioneer life, and perils from enemies and dangerous animals lurking in forest and field had a similar effect. And we can easily see how insecurity and discomfort in traveling must have proved a serious obstacle to the enjoyment of scenery, including the much-abused mountains. Many of these deterring factors still exist today in the less civilized parts of the globe.

Paradoxically, the advance of science and civilization, while clearing away certain fundamental impediments to the appreciation of Nature, brings new ones in its train. Freedom to travel near and far, to see fresh sights and explore little-known lands, has increased immeasurably during the past century through the development of the modern railroad, steamship, automobile and airplane. Yet the industrial revolution and the machine age have, in our economic system, so stimulated the growth of cities, so encouraged a psychology of haste and strain, and so overwhelmed men with new and pressing social-economic

problems that they have perhaps done more to hamper than to help the appreciation of Nature.

In the United States, a country unsurpassed in the variety and magnificence of its natural beauty, close to sixty per cent of the population is urban. These 85,000,000 or more persons certainly do not on the whole maintain a close and continual relationship with Nature. It is primarily the urban environment that enters vitally into their lives; and as individuals these metropolitan millions do not have much choice in the matter. Inevitably the city milieu moulds their likes and dislikes, their enjoyments and recreations. To a considerable extent urban cultural standards permeate the village and agricultural districts, so that even the American farmer is suburban in his tastes. Plainly, people who live in the country are not necessarily highly sensitive to the charms of Nature.

Science during the last hundred years has greatly expanded man's vision of the amazing scope of the universe in space and time and greatly enlarged his knowledge of the relationship between him and the rest of Nature. This recent science has opened up to man vast new regions of super-stars and galaxies; it has made him realize that in his very flesh and blood he is one with the dynamic and multi-structured matter that pervades the entire cosmos; it has demonstrated that he has evolved from the most humble origins in the primordial substance and is cousin to all living things. The revelations of biology strengthen the basis for human kindness to animals and for a sympathetic attitude towards all sentient life. Meanwhile the increasing control that science has won

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over external Nature makes it clear that the most serious danger at present to man is man himself and not non-human Nature.

For the mature mind, then, the progress of modern science enhances and broadens the appreciation of Nature that I am urging. It adds depth and meaning to that appreciation by helping man to see more clearly the sources of his being and the intimate inter-relations between him and his cosmic matrix. These observations bring out the point that Nature appreciation in and of itself, as a more or less isolated activity, does not meet the requirements of the philosophic approach. What I am seeking is the conscious integration of a deep-going awareness and enjoyment of natural beauty into an inclusive Humanist philosophy. My aim, however, does not imply the worship of Nature or the well-known excesses of the Romantic attitude toward the natural world.

Philosophy as criticism has the obligation to analyze current values and to call attention to any great lack in the lives of human beings. Today one such lack is a real aesthetic and philosophic responsiveness to Nature's beauty among considerable sections of mankind and especially among the busy, hurrying city-dwellers so characteristic of our age and of America. For Humanism, on the positive side, there is in this connection a definite opportunity — to correct a lamentable one-sidedness in contemporary man and to round out human nature by making it entirely aware of non-human Nature and the infinite potentialities in the natural environment. At the same time the detailed analysis of Nature appreciation

can bring to Humanism a greater understanding of the meaning and scope of mystical experience; and also provide Humanists with essential background and a wider vision in the field of aesthetics, for which the contemplation of natural beauty has many implications.

Finally, the whole-hearted appreciation of Nature serves to buttress effectively the Humanist outlook in general. Humanism, in its opposition to supernaturalism and Idealism, has necessarily become involved in numerous negations. By including in its program a moderate stress on the beauty of Nature, Humanism becomes able to make one of the most powerful and persuasive of all affirmations. Without yielding to animism we can suggest that non-human Nature, including the myriad graceful and colorful forms of beast, bird and fish, gives to those attuned to it a sense of being fully at home in this world. There is no heavenly Father in or behind Nature; but Nature is truly our fatherland.

In the framework of the Humanist world-view the ever-present glory of the visible natural takes the place of the traditional glory of the invisible supernatural. This is a fair exchange, and more; but its full advantages are lost unless philosophers and men at large rejoice profoundly in the inexhaustible beauties of their earth and universe.

## CHAPTER V RELIANCE ON REASON AND SCIENCE

### 1. *Five Ways of Seeking Knowledge*

In determining what ideas are true and what actions are sound, Humanism depends upon human reason unaided, and unimpeded, by any alleged supernatural sources. Reason at its best and most successful is essentially synonymous with scientific method. We come nearest to living the life of reason when we approximate most closely to the methods of science in our treatment of difficulties and in our solution or attempted solution of problems. During a large proportion of our waking careers, however, when we are acting according to long-established habit or are immersed in the immediate enjoyment of things, we are not engaged in trying either to solve problems or to enlarge our knowledge. Hence it is only part of the time that we need to use reason and scientific method.

Historically there have been five chief ways of seeking the truth: through revelation, through authority, through intuition, through rationalism and through scientific method. Traditional religion has relied heavily on supernatural revelation in its quest for knowledge, as when some revered prophet or religious leader receives the word of

God more or less direct and proclaims his vision as the absolute and immutable truth that the Almighty has vouchsafed to disclose to man. Such a prophet was Moses as described in the Old Testament and such a truth was the Ten Commandments which Jehovah personally revealed to him upon a mountain-top. The Bible in general is a book built upon the continuing and often dramatic disclosures of the Lord to his elect. In any religion the ideas and insights that a believer purports to acquire by means of prayer are presumed to come through revelation from a supernatural power.

Another common manner of ostensibly obtaining revelations from divine sources, particularly among primitive peoples, has been by resort to pure and simple magic in the form of divination. We can identify more than fifty different varieties of miraculous divination that have been depended upon during the history of the human race. Types widespread in the ancient world were hieromancy or divination by the entrails of sacrificed animals; capnomancy or divination by smoke from the altar; and astrology or divination by the stars. According to the "science" of astrology, the character and career of every human being is fore-ordained by the position of the heavenly bodies at the time of his birth. It is a significant commentary on the degree of superstition still existent in this modern age that in the year 1946 there were, according to competent estimates, as many as 3,000,000 devotees of astrology in the United States. Another species of divination that many modern men take seriously is palmistry.



The method of supernatural revelation in acquiring knowledge is also that of the religious mystics, many of whom have remained outside the bounds of any official church. The mystics supposedly get in direct touch with God or the World-Soul through super-rational and super-sensuous trances, visions or intuitions. However, it is the considered judgment of the best students of religious mysticism that the characteristic experiences of mystics are wholly naturalistic and humanistic in origin and content. Some of the most prominent mystics have plainly shown symptoms of epilepsy, hysteria or neurasthenia; others have been the victims of frustrated ambition or frustrated sexual passion. The work of Sigmund Freud and his discovery of the profound influence of the subconscious on the mental life of men and women also throws much light on the reports of mystics. Moreover, scientific investigation has found that states of ecstasy akin to those of the professional mystic can be produced in individuals by certain drugs, gases and alcoholic stimulants; and by certain physical ordeals such as fasting, flagellation and intense or prolonged dancing.

Most important of all, it seems to me, in establishing a natural continuity between professional mystics and other men is the fact that the ordinary, healthy, life-affirming person himself experiences moments and periods of real ecstasy: when listening, let us say, to some great symphony or sonata, when reading some magnificent passage of prose or poetry, when stirred by the emotion of love, when deeply enjoying some aspect of Nature's beauty. These experiences and many others that touch upon the

rapturous or dreamy, or lead to sudden glory or illumination, can give rise to that "normal mysticism" which I mentioned in the last chapter.

Humanists do not doubt that the famous mystics and prophets have had remarkable and soul-shaking subjective experiences. What we doubt is the correctness of their interpretation of these experiences, the *meaning* that they give to them. Ecstatic states in which one feels a vastly heightened sense of happiness or importance, freedom or power, are human experiences and nothing more. They do not justify the subject's conviction that he is conversing with the Lord Almighty or is in communication with another realm of being altogether. William James tells about a man who was able to have the mystical experience by taking laughing-gas. "Whenever he was under its influence, he knew the secret of the universe, but when he came to, he had forgotten it. At last, with immense effort, he wrote down the secret before the vision had faded. When completely recovered, he rushed to see what he had written. It was: 'A smell of petroleum prevails throughout.'"<sup>102</sup>

What is pre-supposed in the method of obtaining truth through religious or mystical revelation is the existence of a supernatural faculty of knowledge in man, the existence of a supernatural God, and the intimate concern and acquaintance of that Supreme Being with human problems. All of these assumptions the Humanist of course considers unwarranted. The idea of a supernatural faculty of knowledge in human beings is tied up with the old dualistic psychology and its theory of a supernatural soul;

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it is altogether inconsistent with our monistic thesis of mind and body as a naturalistic unity. The Humanist, then, looks upon divine revelation in religion as simply what certain leaders of men, often wiser than their fellows, decide is the truth during periods of special inspiration and insight.

As a religion grows more mature and more firmly established, the need arises for constant determination of what is authentic revelation and of how that revelation should be interpreted in relation to a multitude of concrete questions. Usually the central church body or the highest official, such as the Catholic Pope, with his alleged infallibility on matters of faith and morals, assumes this responsibility and authority. And the members of such a Church receive as unquestioned dogma the pronouncements of the recognized authority.

It is not only in the sphere of religion that the method of authority carries undue weight; there are also political and artistic and even academic faithful who, willing to subordinate their personal opinions or wishing to avoid the strain of independent thinking, give their assent to whatever "truths" some self-perpetuating council or high functionary or imperious pundit hands down. This surrender of the mind to authority naturally favors the defenders of traditional views in the realm of knowledge and of the *status quo* in the realm of social and economic affairs. The methods of authority and of revelation both ultimately demand that those who accept them have invincible faith, like the early Church Father, Tertulian,

who made the truly breath-taking statement, "It is certain because it is impossible."

Closely related to religious and mystical revelation as a way of knowing, but with higher standing in philosophy, is intuition — the direct, immediate and certain apprehension of truth by the human personality without the intervention of any reasoning process. Intuition as the royal road to infallible and self-evident knowledge has ever been a favored method for the religious or mystical mind. The Humanist does not deny that men have the gift of something that can be legitimately called *intuition*; but insofar as intuition turns out to be reliable, it is simply very nimble sense perception or thinking that penetrates to the heart of a situation with more than usual speed. Much has been made of "woman's intuition," as if the female of the species possessed a special faculty of knowledge not present in the male. The kernel of truth in this myth is that in certain situations women's perceptions, due to training and conditioning, may function more swiftly and accurately than men's. Intuition at its best amounts to nothing more than making a good, quick guess — having a "hunch" in the popular idiom — which may prove to be correct, but which always requires verification.

The fourth unacceptable way of seeking knowledge is that of traditional rationalism, which, basing itself at the start on certain fundamental mathematical or logical assumptions, builds up from them, through rigorous deduction a closely inter-related complex of ideas into a coherent whole. Rationalism as a method has had considerable philosophic sanction and was the primary re-

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liance of even so great a philosopher as Spinoza. But brilliant as have been the achievements of certain thinkers who followed the rationalist procedure, it has grave shortcomings in that it submits neither the original propositions, which may be selected through intuition, nor the final conclusions to experimental verification. Of course *contemporary* rationalism, as I noted earlier,\* is thoroughly scientific in its methods.

The fatal flaw in all four of the truth-seeking methods that I have just outlined is that they give no place to the empirical verification and controlled experimentation that are so absolutely fundamental in modern science. Actually modern scientific method does make a limited use of authority, intuition, and rationalism. Over a long period of time scientists gradually develop a central core of authority in the form of independently verified and generally acknowledged facts and laws. But this body of authority can be and must be continually challenged and revised; any scientific judgment whatsoever is always subject to further appeal. Scientists also depend on intuition, in the humanistic sense, when they draw upon their imaginations to suggest new hypotheses for the solution of a problem.

Scientists utilize the rationalist method, insofar as it entails strict deduction from clear premises, throughout the scientific enterprise. Likewise scientists can accept rationalism's doctrine of an ultimate coherence among all ideas that are true. To attain such coherence, in the form of a system of propositions all of which are strictly consistent with one another, must be an ideal in any science as

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\* See p. 36.

well as for all of the sciences regarded as a whole. For example, every proposition accepted as true in biology ought to be entirely consistent with every proposition accepted as true in psychology; and vice versa. This principle holds among all the different fields of knowledge.

We see, then, that there was some element of soundness in three out of the four unacceptable ways of attempting to establish knowledge; and that, as so frequently has happened in philosophy, thinkers over-stressed some particular aspect of the quest for truth and thereby failed to make a fully rounded approach. The fifth way of acquiring knowledge, modern scientific method, embodies whatever is valid in past methods and adds its own distinguishing characteristic of empirical confirmation through accurate observation and experiment. It is this quality of modern science that has chiefly accounted for its enormous success in broadening the area of knowledge, accelerating the process of invention and extending man's control over his environment.

## 2. *Modern Scientific Method*

The development, over the past four centuries, of a universally reliable method for attaining knowledge is a far more important achievement on the part of science than its discovery of any single truth. For once men acquire a thoroughly dependable *method* of truth-seeking, a method that can be applied to every sphere of human life and by anyone who faithfully conforms to certain

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directives, then they have as a permanent possession an instrument of infinite power that will serve them as long as mankind endures. Scientific method is such an instrument. And not only does it constantly revise and render more precise our present body of knowledge, but it also steadily improves upon itself.

Yet closely bound up as scientific method has been with technical procedures and laboratory experiments, it is, as T. H. Huxley once said, "nothing but trained and organized common sense." In an essay entitled, "We Are All Scientists," Huxley wrote: "There is no more difference, but there is just the same kind of difference, between the mental operations of a man of science and those of an ordinary person, as there is between the operations and methods of a baker or of a butcher weighing out his goods in common scales, and the operations of a chemist in performing a difficult and complex analysis by means of his balance and finely graduated weights. It is not that the action of the scales in the one case, and the balance in the other, differ in the principles of their construction or manner of working; but the beam of one is set on an infinitely finer axis than the other, and of course turns by the addition of a much smaller weight. . . . Probably there is not one who has not in the course of the day had occasion to set in motion a complex train of reasoning, of the very same kind, though differing of course in degree, as that which a scientific man goes through in tracing the course of natural phenomena."<sup>103</sup>

The process of trial and error, fumbling and success, that every man follows to some extent constitutes scientific

method in a rudimentary form. Every time you buy a suit, a pair of shoes or a meal you are attempting to the best of your ability to solve a certain problem and to give yourself a certain satisfaction. To the extent that you succeed you are being scientific. You may try on three suits of varying fabric and color at the clothing store, viewing yourself in the mirror each time and conducting in reality three experiments of a semi-scientific nature. You at last select a single-breasted dark grey that seems to look well on you. The final verification of whether your choice was a good one or not comes later when you find out how the suit wears and how appropriate it is for the different occasions of your daily living.

Now let me present another illustration that brings out clearly the basic continuity between scientific method and plain, prosaic, everyday thinking. Some years ago, on a cold winter's morning I was trying to unlock the door of my Plymouth car but could get the key only half-way into the key-hole. Quickly analyzing the trouble, I decided that there must be some water or moisture frozen inside the lock and immediately resorted to impromptu trial and error. First, I attempted extra strong physical pressure to force the key all the way in, but to no avail. Next, I breathed vigorously into the lock, with the intent of possibly thawing it out. This did not work either. My third "experiment," based on the none too certain memory of an anecdote I had once heard, was to place the key as far as it would go in the key-hole, light an ordinary match and apply the flame for a moment or two to the protruding end of the metal key. Then I pushed the heated



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key hard again. This time it went all the way in, apparently having melted or softened the ice, and I unlocked the door. In larger and more important problems, however, the simple trial-and-error method can be very costly. In the case of illness, for instance, the patient might well die while various random cures were being tried.

Let us take an example of reliance upon true scientific method that has had great relevance for many a family. Suppose your twelve-year-old son wakes up on a windy March morning and says that he does not feel well. On questioning him, you elicit the information that he has a slight headache and no appetite for breakfast. You take his temperature and find that it is 100 — not high, yet sufficient to pay attention to. You wonder what can be the matter with him. Is it a mere digestive upset, is it grippe, is it appendicitis or is it the start of a serious disease like scarlet fever? By lunch-time your child is feeling a little dizzy and complains of pains in the general region of his "stomach." You telephone the family physician and ask him to come in as soon as possible. He arrives later in the afternoon, thoroughly examines the young patient and is able to locate the pains as coming from the right side of the abdomen. The doctor says that the symptoms seem to point to an inflamed appendix and recommends calling in a surgeon.

After supper your son's pain increases and his temperature rises a little. The surgeon arrives, reviews the whole situation and verifies the family physician's diagnosis that, yes, this is a bad appendix. He discusses the idea of keeping the boy in bed for a few days to see if the ap-

pendix will calm down and also the alternate possibility of operating to remove it. You decide to send your child at once to the hospital, where he can be under constant medical observation. Early next morning the surgeon checks carefully and advises an immediate operation to take out the appendix, with the family physician concurring. You agree to this drastic step and the operation takes place at noon. It is successful and the surgeon reports that the appendix was very badly infected and in all probability would soon have ruptured. Your son makes a rapid recovery, comes home within a week and is back at school at the end of three weeks.

When we break down this typical case in the field of medicine into its component parts, we see that it exemplifies the five main steps, formulated by Professor Dewey in his book *How We Think*,<sup>104</sup> that usually take place in working out a problem according to scientific method. First, there is the occurrence of a perplexity or problem: your son is feeling unwell. Second, there is analysis and clarification of the problem by means of observation and reflection, an attempt to answer the question, "Precisely what is the trouble?" You take the boy's temperature; two doctors examine him and arrive at the diagnosis of appendicitis. Third, there is the suggestion of different solutions or working hypotheses for the problem of the inflamed appendix: keeping the patient quiet for a while in hopes that the attack will pass away or removing the appendix entirely through surgery. Fourth, there is the reasoning out of the consequences involved in each hypothesis and its evaluation in terms of these consequences.

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Is there much danger in an operation? Can the family afford it financially? Is there more risk in following a wait-and-see strategy? With the advice of the surgeon and regular family physician you finally decide on the more radical procedure. Fifth, there is convincing verification of the chosen solution in that your son completely recovers from his illness and the appendix itself is discovered to have been in a most dangerous condition.

Of course I have over-simplified in this account of the five steps and should mention in addition that the doctors' procedures are formulated and carried out in the light of their long and wide experience with other similar cases. I have assumed that the doctors are competent and that their diagnosis (step two) is correct, though often in medical practice the diagnosis is more difficult to work out than the cure, which may already have been well-established through previous experiments. Also, step five in this case of appendicitis amounts to verification only against the background of numerous other cases of a like nature.

There are some problems which require or permit no fifth step, those of pure mathematics, for instance, in which the very tracing of the implications of an hypothesis, through mathematical deduction, amount to verification. Moreover, many scientific hypotheses are not susceptible to final proof through *direct* observation, but are proved true through empirical verification of the logical or mathematical inferences following strictly from the said hypotheses. No astronomer has ever been able to watch the earth in its entire course revolve around the

sun. Astronomers have verified the solarcentric theory by showing that it implies and is implied by a number of observations that can be and have been made of the positions of the earth, the other planets and the sun. In the field of philosophy this indirect method of verification is extremely important.

I do not claim that all good scientists consciously follow the five-step formula I have described; what I do claim is that their successful solution of scientific problems can always be analyzed according to this formula. Of course the average man in the carrying out of his daily affairs is not aware that separable stages of thought are involved. Our thinking in relation to the more simple situations usually proceeds so rapidly that it is difficult to draw any hard-and-fast line between the successive steps.

I wish to take up now an outstanding historical example of scientific method as exemplified, again, in the sphere of medicine. This concerns the problem of yellow fever, an epidemic tropical illness that once slew its victims by the scores of thousands and that sent seventy or eighty per cent of those afflicted to the grave. In Cuba during the Spanish-American war of 1898, yellow fever killed more American soldiers than did Spanish bullets and shrapnel. After the end of hostilities the disease raged on amidst the Cuban people and the American army of occupation. Yellow fever was certainly a serious and widespread menace in the Cuba just liberated from Spanish rule.

Recognition of this fact constituted the first step in the scientific study of the enigma of yellow fever. Careful

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analysis of the disease, the second step, showed that it spread quickly, malignantly, mysteriously, striking here, there and everywhere; claiming victims from families that had had no apparent personal contact with the malady; sweeping suddenly through a whole town or city and taking hostages from every sort of group — poor and rich, young and old, weak and strong. The most pressing problem became: how is this dreadful fever transmitted?

Coming to step three, we find that there were many ideas current about the transmission of the disease. But they boiled down to two main hypotheses: yellow fever was caused and transmitted by an identifiable bacillus or microbe which was carried by contaminated objects such as the clothes used by an infected person; or the fever was transmitted by the bites of mosquitos carrying the infection from one person to another. The second hypothesis was that of Dr. Carlos Finlay of Havana, whom sensible people regarded as something of a crank.

Step four, the reasoning out of the implications of these two hypotheses, was fairly simple. If the first hypothesis were true, then close exposure, for instance, to the bed-clothes or wearing apparel of those who had contracted yellow fever should cause the disease in at least some persons so exposed. If the second one were true — and nearly everyone thought it was absurd—then a mosquito which had bitten a yellow-fever victim or fed upon his blood and which subsequently bit normal, healthy persons ought in a decisive number of cases to cause the disease in the latter.

Experimental verification here, step five in scientific

method, required controlled experiments on human beings, since no available animals were susceptible to the disease. Major Walter Reed of the U. S. Army Medical Corps, a tough-minded and determined doctor who was head of the special Yellow Fever Commission in Cuba, did not hesitate to call for volunteers. And a number of American soldiers, who well knew they would be risking their lives, responded to his appeal. Dr. Reed, after some preliminary and unsuccessful work in trying to spot a yellow-fever bacillus, veered toward the mosquito hypothesis which almost all of the experts and authorities, including members of his own Commission, thought so foolish. His strenuous and persistent efforts to prove this hypothesis constitute one of the most exciting episodes in the history of medicine.

Dr. Reed had a small camp built near a town called Quemados; and there he isolated in separate tents seven volunteers, guarding them for days and weeks from all danger of accidental contact with yellow fever and tenaciously keeping away from them, through carefully constructed screens, any stray mosquitos that might be flying about. Then he brought to the camp his own special mosquitos, which about two weeks previously had feasted upon yellow-fever patients, and turned them loose on the seven human guinea-pigs to inject whatever lethal germs they had acquired into the blood-stream of these men. Within a week after being bitten, six out of seven of the volunteers came down with typical cases of yellow fever; and one of them died.

That looked like fairly conclusive proof of the mosquito

hypothesis. But Walter Reed was not through. He had to *disprove* the other hypothesis, to show that the fever was carried *only* by mosquitos. So he took three more volunteers and put them in a stuffy little house at the camp. Then he sent in to them the soiled and well-used pillows, sheets and blankets of persons who had died from yellow fever. The three volunteers made up their army cots with these filthy bed-clothes and slept on these cots in the hot, stuffy house for twenty nights. Not one of them contracted yellow fever. Dr. Reed was not yet finished, however. He sent in three more volunteers to sleep for twenty more nights in new contaminated bed-clothes and in the very pajamas of yellow-fever victims. But no yellow fever resulted. Finally, he sent in three more men to repeat the experiment, with the added refinement of sleeping on pillows covered with towels soaked in the blood of men dead from the fever. Still no yellow fever followed.

Dr. Reed and his Commission performed other experiments with fresh batches of volunteers, but I shall not go into the further details. The main problem had been solved; the means through which yellow fever was transmitted had been discovered. By waging a furious war of extermination against the species of mosquito concerned, known as the *Stegomyia fasciata*, American sanitary engineers soon almost completely stamped out yellow fever in Cuba. It has since been largely eliminated in the civilized regions of the globe. Nonetheless — and this may seem anomalous — the actual and original *cause* of yellow fever has not yet been established, though it seems certain

that it is some sort of ultra-microscopic virus that can penetrate the finest filters.

Turning to another field of science, we can see the same pattern of scientific method exemplified in the astronomical discoveries of Copernicus which, in the sixteenth century, opened up the revolutionary era of modern science. Copernicus, as a thorough student of mathematics and astronomy, became troubled (first step) over the traditional and almost universal conception of a motionless earth as the center of the universe and over the description of the heavenly bodies as worked out by the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy in the second century A.D. When (second step) he analyzed his feeling that something was wrong, Copernicus stated that the fearful complexity of Ptolemy's calculations, which required no less than seventy-nine separate assumptions, was for him inconsistent with the perfection of God, who, he believed, operated through simple and harmonious laws.

He then proceeded (third step) to search for an hypothesis that would explain the motions of the heavenly bodies more simply. And he took upon himself, Copernicus says, "the task of rereading the books of all the philosophers which I could obtain, to seek out whether anyone had ever conjectured that the motions of the spheres of the universe were other than they supposed who taught mathematics in the schools. And I found first that, according to Cicero, Hicetas had thought the earth was moved. Then later I discovered, according to Plutarch, that certain others had held the same opinion. . . . When from this, therefore, I had conceived its possibility, I my-



self began to meditate upon the mobility of the earth."<sup>105</sup>

The hypothesis that Copernicus finally developed was that the sun and fixed stars should be considered as at rest, with the earth in continual motion on its axis and making a regular revolution once a year around the sun. Working out logically and mathematically the implications of this solarcentric theory (fourth step), he found that it enabled him to give a far more simple and uniform representation of the known astronomical data than did Ptolemy's complex system. Since Copernicus did not possess any important new astronomical data, he was not able to go on to the fifth step of verification through experiment.

Copernicus's brilliant successors, Kepler and Galileo, did have at their disposal new and significant astronomical observations and were able to carry through the fifth step, confirming with fresh empirical evidence the solarcentric hypothesis. More than that, they improved on Copernicus's theory by eliminating a number of planetary irregularities that it permitted and by showing that the planets move around the sun in the figure of a simple oval, an ellipse, instead of the perfect circle which Copernicus had assumed. Later, Newton put the finishing touches on this phase of astrophysics with his great law of gravitation, which held for all material bodies and thus linked together under one inclusive principle things both terrestrial and astronomical.

I could go on indefinitely giving important historical examples of the successful use of scientific method and of how this method always follows in general the five-

step, or sometimes four-step, formula that I have been describing. But I shall now pass on to some necessary comments that apply to the scientific process as a whole. There are certain simple essentials that hold for every stage of scientific inquiry. These are sound observation, creative imagination, correct reasoning and moral determination.

Sound observation is important particularly in step two, when we are analyzing and clarifying the problem, and in step five, when we are verifying empirically our hypothesis or hypotheses. Prerequisites of reliable observation are keen and normal sense organs and command of available tools, both intellectual, in the form of ideas which help us to recognize and define the elements of our experience, and mechanical, which improve upon our senses and often enable us to manipulate existing materials for experimental purposes.

Professor Edwin A. Burt of Cornell writes that "the history of science could be written in terms of the progressive invention of more powerful instruments for exact observation. The story of modern astronomy is largely the story of the telescope."<sup>106</sup> Of course much of the story of modern biology and modern medicine is the story of the microscope. Think, too, how significant was the invention of the simple mouth thermometer for measuring a person's temperature, an instrument that can be used by any intelligent mother in the day-to-day maintenance of a healthy family. And where would a doctor be today without the aid of the stethoscope, the X-ray and the various instruments for testing the blood?

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Creative imagination is especially important in steps one or two, when we are becoming aware of and diagnosing a problem, and in step three, when we are trying to think up fruitful hypotheses. Some of the greatest advances in science have sprung from inquiring and discerning minds who have seen a problem where nobody was ever conscious of one before. As the saying goes, "To know what to ask is already to know half." Obviously a wide-ranging and powerful imagination is of immense advantage in the apprehension of possible solutions to a problem; and here it is that the flash of genius as contrasted with mere random guessing counts perhaps more than anywhere else in the enterprise of science.

While there is much variation in the way individuals perform their best intellectual work and while constant pressure may be a necessary stimulus to some, plenty of relaxation seems to be one of the factors generally favorable to the emergence of great scientific hypotheses. The famous German physicist, Helmholtz, tells us that after prior investigation of a scientific problem "happy ideas come unexpectedly, without effort, like an inspiration. So far as I am concerned, they have never come to me when my mind was fatigued, or when I was at my working table. . . . They came particularly readily during the slow ascent of wooded hills on a sunny day."<sup>107</sup>

Correct reasoning, the process of inference or deduction, is absolutely necessary in all phases of scientific investigation, but is particularly important in step four when we develop the logical implications of our hypotheses. Correct reasoning is the subject matter of an end-

less number of textbooks in formal logic, with their technical discussion of definition and classification, major premises and minor premises, syllogisms and fallacies and all the rest. There is no room in this volume for the rules and details of logic and I must refer the reader to some such work as Professor Burt's authoritative *Right Thinking*, which gives an excellent exposition from the Humanist viewpoint of the entire process of scientific method.

The fundamental laws of deduction were enunciated by Aristotle 2300 years ago, and since then there has been little improvement on his formulations. Admittedly, important developments have taken place in mathematics; and more recently the new and formidable discipline of symbolic logic has come into being. But Aristotle's simple laws of thought remain definitive for valid reasoning, though some of the metaphysical implications he associated with them are questionable and though his ideas on scientific method in general have been to a large degree superseded.

It was Emerson who remarked that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines."<sup>108</sup> The truth in this observation is that consistent reasoning or action on the basis of incorrect premises may lead to disaster, and that common sense and the direct appeal to experience should be continually invoked to check the conclusions of deduction. This is another way of saying that we should place our reliance upon the *complete* following out of scientific method and not merely upon that part of it which centers around correct deduction.

A part of the discipline of formal logic that has recently been receiving special attention is *definition*. A whole school of experts in the so-called science of semantics has been promulgating the theory that most of men's serious problems are merely verbal, that they stem from wrong definition, faulty syntax and the resulting misunderstanding of meanings. "Metaphysics," according to one semanticist, "is simply bad grammar." In the excessive claims of the semanticists we recognize once again the specious over-emphasis of one philosophic idea or value, which is perfectly acceptable when kept within moderate bounds. In his *Dialogues* Plato established on behalf of philosophy the Socratic method of insisting upon a painstaking definition of words and ideas. Aristotle, in his presentation of logic, developed this method further. And it is along these same lines laid down in ancient Greece that semantics will presumably make its permanent contribution to philosophy.

Offhand, the attribute of moral determination might not seem like a very relevant part of the scientist's equipment. Yet even a cursory study of the history of thought shows how intense and unremitting have been religious, political and social pressures upon those who have dared to challenge some traditional dogma and to blaze fresh paths through the jungles of human superstition. Ever among the pioneers of intellectual progress have been scientists whose devotion to truth and truth-seeking has taken precedence over their personal well-being and fate. Even in times and places where the avowal of unorthodox ideas has not actually endangered the lives of scientists,

they have constantly been subject to ridicule, public abuse or loss of livelihood.

In the early centuries of modern science it was the astronomers and physicists who chiefly suffered persecution, because the Church feared that their discoveries and the implications of those discoveries would undermine the old-time religious views of the world, and because the ruling class of that age felt that its continued domination was bound up with the ruling myths of feudal society. Today it is those whose field is the social sciences who are most in danger, due to the fact that their findings may indicate the desirability of drastic changes in the social and economic system. The main threat to atomic scientists and other workers in the natural sciences arises from their holding liberal or radical opinions on socio-economic issues. Even in supposedly democratic America scientists in general have come under increasing pressure by both university administrations and government bodies to conform or remain silent; and they have need of profound sources of courage and endurance in order to maintain their academic freedom.

Though scientific workers, like men and women in other professions, must naturally undergo rigorous training and possess certain personal qualities, scientific achievement and the scientific habit of thought are definite potentialities of the average person. As Professor Frederick Barry of Columbia writes: "It is no more necessary that every scientist should be an original thinker than that every executive should be so. This is one of the reasons why research is so productive."<sup>109</sup> He goes on to state

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that the bulk of the work in science is done by those *who follow the rules* and who, outside of their profession, hold varying philosophical, political and other views.

It is essential to note, too, that science in its most fruitful aspects is a cooperative venture. Says the eminent English chemist Frederick Soddy: "The results of those who labor in the fields of knowledge for its own sake are published freely and pooled in the general stock for the benefit of all. Common ownership of all its acquisitions is the breath of its life. Secrecy or individualism of any kind would destroy its fertility."<sup>110</sup> This scientific cooperation is not only a contemporary thing, but extends into the past and future as well. "If I have seen further than Descartes," once remarked Newton, "it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."<sup>111</sup>

The statements by Soddy and Newton point toward the fact that scientific method is in essence a democratic method in which men seek and attain truth through free, independent investigation carried on by qualified individuals and groups throughout the world. This process entails an open ballot, as it were, as to which among competing ideas and hypotheses are sound; and finally results in the *social* verification of scientific concepts. By the same token science is international in implication, scope and operation.

Humanism believes that the greatest need of our age is the application, insofar as it is possible, of the method and spirit of science to all human problems and that the acquisition of this method and spirit constitutes a training of the mind far more important than the assimila-

tion of any number of individual facts. Scientific method is embodied at the present time in hundreds of thousands of inventions, industrial processes and medical techniques of which everyone is glad to accept the benefits. Yet the unfortunate paradox is that relatively few adopt for their own general use this method that has made possible the automobile, the radio, man-controlled electricity, steel and concrete, the printing-press, the X-ray machine, inoculation against various diseases, and the establishment of a multitude of basic scientific facts and laws.

The disastrous consequences of this inconsistency are revealed, above all, in the broad realm of political, social and economic activities, as witness the unhappy state of mankind in this fifth decade of the twentieth century. In the world of public affairs the nearest approach to scientific method still remains for the most part the elementary trial-and-error, hit-or-miss improvisation which, even when it occasionally results in sound policies, proves extremely costly and time-consuming. For the Humanist, then, the more adequate development of the social sciences is far and away the most important scientific task of this generation.

Everyone acknowledges that it is a good deal more difficult to apply scientific method in economics and sociology, in government and international relations, than in physics or chemistry or astronomy. Human beings and human societies are much more complex than atoms or the solar system, and more subject to multiple causation. The most successful scientific experimentation demands both isolation of the problem and rigid control over sub-



ject matter so far as the purposes of an experiment are concerned. Neither of these prerequisites is easy to obtain in the social sciences. It is not possible to experiment with men and women and children as with chemical solutions in a test-tube or some species of animal in a laboratory. Few human beings are willing to be treated as guinea-pigs, even for the high ends of science. And if I am right in my contention that individuals possess true freedom of choice, that makes even more formidable the task of the social sciences in arriving at dependable laws and predictions.

Moreover, it is by no means easy for social scientists to maintain strict objectivity and eliminate all personal and subjective bias. This difficulty is complicated by the fact that new theories in the social sciences are likely, as I have indicated, to arouse passionate opposition on the part of individuals or groups who feel that they stand to lose by some alteration in the *status quo*. Thus it is that the discussion of economic, social and international problems becomes suffused with intense emotion, which prevents the public from considering reasonably the various solutions suggested and which reacts badly on the work of the scientists themselves.

Perhaps the most important guiding hypothesis that has come to maturity in the social sciences during the last century is that of the economic interpretation of history and contemporary events. This means giving economic factors priority on the whole in the explanation of history, but it decidedly does not rule out the causal efficacy of other factors interacting with the economic yet in general play-

ing less of a role. One of the first and clearest formulations of the economic interpretation, as applied to politics, was put forward in 1787 by James Madison, fourth President of the United States and justly called "the Father of the Constitution." Madison of course believed in the sacredness of private property and advocated a harmonization of the various class interests in society.

He explained that the first object of government is to protect "the diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate. . . . From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results: and from the influences of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties. . . . The most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors, and those who are debtors, fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes actuated by different sentiments and views."<sup>112</sup>

Thus we see that the economic interpretation of history, usually associated with the Marxists, was enunciated, at least in relation to politics, many years before Karl Marx was born. Marx and Engels, however, developed the idea in more precise and general form, applying it to the whole

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of social and cultural life. According to their doctrine of Historical Materialism, the underlying factor in the flow of history is not merely the natural conditions of production, such as the supply of raw materials and the characteristics of geography, nor merely the techniques of production, such as the state of metallurgy and of machine processes, but the *total relations* of production, the entire economic structure of society.

Now these total relations of production express themselves at any given time in certain *property* relations which are crystallized in definite class forms covering all the various aspects of civilized life. This is why for Marx and Engels class struggles, often masked in religious or nationalist movements and wars, have played the central role in human affairs. The class struggle reaches its final phase in the opposition between the capitalist class and the working class, with the latter eventually attaining power and constructing the new classless society of socialism.

As the case of President Madison attests, you do not have to be any sort of radical or Marxist in order to believe in *an* economic interpretation of history. In America some of our most able historians, such as the late Charles Beard, have followed a non-Marxist economic interpretation and do not support the cause of the working class or the goal of socialism. Curiously enough, even our leading capitalists and businessmen, who spend so much time seeking to refute Marx, often adhere without realizing it to an economic interpretation by making the claim that human beings are motivated chiefly by the quest for profits and that the system of "free enterprise" has be-

come the necessary foundation for human well-being in general and democracy in particular.

Concluding our general discussion of the social sciences, I think we can say that, despite various handicaps due to their very nature, they have made rapid progress both in methodology and results since the turn of the century. As regards method, they have come to rely more and more upon statistics and functional correlation. It is needful to remember that the social sciences in the full sense of the term are still very young. Whereas modern scientific method became thoroughly established and accepted in the natural sciences during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it achieved a commanding position in the social disciplines only during the last part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth.

### *3. Science and the Meaning of Truth*

Since Humanism places its chief reliance on scientific method in the acquisition of human knowledge, it logically takes its cue from scientific method in trying to determine the nature of truth. A careful analysis of both the natural and the social sciences shows, in the first place, that we do not attain something that is to be called "absolute" truth, but rather varying degrees of probability, of approximation to the precise and complete truth. In other words, for all practical purposes the true is the very, very probable; yet as such it is a dependable guide for action and by far the best guide that we can find in science, philosophy, politics or any other sphere of human affairs.

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This properly humble recognition that truth in the last analysis is based on probabilism extends not only to the facts and laws of science, but also to those general and ultimate assumptions that are necessary to the whole scientific enterprise. These assumptions, which are presupposed in all scientific factual inquiry and induction, but which can never be absolutely proved, are known as *postulates*. The first one, that of the Uniformity of Nature, hinges upon the observable fact that there are orderly relations, storable in general laws, objectively obtaining among many events or groups of events in our experience. This postulate of the Uniformity of Nature, more accurately described as that of *predictive uniformity*, assumes that "our world is such that a given group of events will show in subsequent experience the same kind and degree of uniformity that they have shown already."<sup>113</sup>

In short, this postulate, without contradicting the conclusion that pluralism and chance exist, makes explicit the pre-supposition that our complex cosmos is by no means a chaos, but can be objectively analyzed and described in terms of regular spatio-temporal conjunctions that hold for the future as well as the past. Were this not so, no scientific laws would stand up as true and no reliable reasoning could be carried on. For the very heart of scientific law consists in the assertion of invariable connections between specified phenomena; and the process of deduction implies throughout regular connections. From one set of premises a certain conclusion follows, from a different set another conclusion; and at least one of the premises always must affirm an actual or supposed

law of relation. Of course, the mathematical method and analysis which are so indispensable to science depend on the existence of regular relations. And though the Euclidean system of mathematics is not the only possible one, it is clear that any other conceivable system must likewise be based on the assumption of regular relations.

The second fundamental postulate of science is that of Causality. Not only are there orderly relations in the world, but also many of these relations are expressible in causal terms. This postulate assumes that every event which occurs has a definite cause and that the same cause always produces the same effect. The assumption of Causality, however, does not pre-suppose that the whole of Nature is bound together in a single, all-inclusive causal system. Such a system would entail that block universe of determinism the existence of which I was at pains to disprove in the last chapter. The point is that there are independent chains of causation which may never intersect at all and which enter into a cause-effect relationship with one another only if they do intersect.

Though the postulates of the Uniformity of Nature and of Causality have been demonstrated as sound in an enormous number of instances and indeed during the entire history of science, they remain assumptions because we cannot be 100 per cent sure that they will hold for all future time. Those who follow scientific method as the surest path to the truth can be said to have *faith* in these two postulates. But it is a faith very unlike that of the supernatural religions, because reliance on these postulates has brought far-reaching success and control to

science and because they continue to be proved justified throughout the course of science and in the everyday life of mankind.

In the second place, an objective study of science shows that all knowledge, even the simplest mathematical proposition, springs originally from human experience within this natural world. Scientific method operates without any dependence on or need of a supernatural mental faculty in man that gets in touch with a supernatural truth-giving Being or that draws ideas out of some mysterious realm beyond Nature. There is no ground, either, for alleging that "scientific" truth originates in the this-earthly experience of man, but that "spiritual" or "ethical" truth comes from on high in an altogether different way. It is the Humanist contention that *all* truth or knowledge has the same natural status and origin.

In the third place, the procedures of science indicate that no idea or group of ideas, regardless of how logical, brilliant or seemingly self-evident, achieves the status of knowledge *immediately*. The establishment of knowledge in any field requires time and trouble in the form of observation, reflection, experimentation and testing. This fact automatically rules out religious revelation or any kind of intuition as in themselves dependable methods of arriving at the truth. The most dazzling flash of insight from whatever source cannot be trusted until it is thoroughly verified.

In order of time, then, knowledge is always secondary and derivative, despite its crucial importance when finally ascertained. After any idea has been definitely established

as an item of knowledge, we can then use it immediately in future situations. There are a multitude of well-tested conceptions about the common-sense world of experience that we have learned to take as a matter of course. Obviously, too, ideas that are once proven true can become instruments of quick and reliable human communication and the objects of pure aesthetic enjoyment and contemplation. These considerations do not run counter to my assertion that the *original* establishment of any item of knowledge is not a matter of immediate apprehension. Immediacy of *use* is not the same as immediacy of *proof*.

The impossibility of self-evident, instantaneous knowledge is closely correlated with the fact that sensations and sensory images *are* immediately had in human experience, but are not in themselves equivalent to knowledge. Past philosophies and psychologies have frequently confused sensations and ideas, claiming that sensations give an instant knowledge of things. Sensations or sense-perceptions in their elementary, undiscriminated flow are simply non-cognitive natural events that are neither true nor false in themselves. They are the immediately felt or sensed experiences which constitute by far the larger part of total human experience, but which are on a different level from the knowledge experience. This point becomes clearer when we remind ourselves that most sub-human animals feel pain and pleasure and have sensations, but do not reason and acquire knowledge.

Human sensations are stimuli to thought and knowledge, and also serve as checks and signs. For instance, a complex of sensations in which a certain shape and color



predominate is not in itself and intrinsically a piece of knowledge; exactly what object it represents is at the outset a matter of doubt and becomes clear only when reflection and scientific discrimination are able to assign to it a specific *meaning* in a specific context. Thus sensation or sense perception enters into a knowledge relation only when it stands for, becomes a sign of, something more than or other than itself, as when a perception of something round and red comes to signify "apple" in one connection and "stop-light" in another. As Dewey sums up the matter, sensory qualities "are not objects of cognition in themselves," but "acquire cognitive function when they are employed in specific situations as signs of something beyond themselves."<sup>114</sup>

When for some human mind any thing or event means, signifies, signalizes, symbolizes, indicates, suggests, represents, stands for, connotes, implies or is a sign of another thing or event, then a person is having an idea. There are many directly sensory or perceptual meanings, as when a red light signifies "stop" or smoke signifies "fire." But most of the established ideas or meanings that men use are conceptual ones and are embodied in and correlated with socially agreed-upon linguistic symbols, that is, in standardized words whose meanings are defined in dictionaries and other books of reference. Words seen or heard come to us in the form of sense perceptions and perform their cognitive role when we are conscious of them as visual or auditory signs bearing a certain meaning. We can listen for hours to a man talking in a foreign language, but unless we understand that language his words will be to us

mere sensations of sound carrying no particular significance. Knowledge is always knowledge of things and events, as mediated through sense experience, *with their meaning or meanings*.

We attain the truth when we attribute to things or events their correct meaning or meanings, in terms of their precise behavior, of their causes and effects, and of their other relationships. An object or event may have a number of meanings, depending upon its various functions and inter-relations. Assigning the wrong meaning or meanings results in untruth or error and thereby in mistaken human actions that may have the most deleterious consequences. A sensation of round redness, an example I cited above, can be established as indicating what we call an apple only after some common-sense reflection, including checking and comparison with past experiences of a like nature. The sensation does not carry its true meaning on the face of it; the object might have turned out to be a tomato or a ball.

This theory of knowledge clears up many problems over which philosophers have wrangled perpetually. A straight stick thrust into water looks bent. Is this bent quality then only an "appearance" as compared with the "real" stick, which is straight? There is in truth no problem here if we accept the perception of bentness as a perfectly real natural event and proceed to work out its correct meaning. That meaning is that the refraction of light through the water causes the stick in this situation to look bent; if I did not see it that way, there would be something wrong with my eyes.

Or take the matter of hallucinations or apparitions, when a man thinks he sees someone or something that is not actually there. We need not necessarily doubt the occurrence of his illusion, but through intellectual analysis we are able to attribute to it its proper meaning. This is, first, that it is a purely personal and subjective phantasm and, second, that the individual in question is drunk or mentally ill or suffering from the effects of some other abnormal state. There is no objectively existing thing in the external world corresponding to the man's vision, but there is an objective cause of it. Dreams are subject to similar treatment. Dreams are events that most certainly occur, as everyone can testify. It is the meaning given to them that so often turns out to be illusory. If I dream that I am talking with a friend who has died, I might interpret it as demonstrating his personal survival in an after-life; but if I am sensible, I shall attribute his appearance in my dream to some such emotion as sorrow over his death and a desire to see him again. If this does not satisfy me, I can go to a psychoanalyst and perhaps get a more scientific explanation.

Our further analysis of science leads, in the fourth place, to the conclusion that a meaning or idea is to be judged true if, in acting upon it, we find that it accomplishes, in terms of concrete consequences, what it *purports* to accomplish; if the potential consequences claimed on its behalf actually take place and are verifiable. Conversely, its unreliability will be demonstrated if these consequences cannot be verified, if the idea *fails* to measure up to its pretensions. A doctor's diagnosis is true if it is

so proved in tests applied to the patient; his idea of a proper cure is likewise proved true or untrue by its results.

This criterion of truth by which a theory or idea is pronounced correct according to whether it succeeds or fails in human verification and action is all-inclusive. It holds with equal relevance for an idea in the realm of physical science, of social science, of purely personal self-interest, of military tactics, of sports, or indeed of any branch whatever of human investigation or activity. A rough-and-ready formula that aims to express this conception of the truth is: an idea or hypothesis is true if it works, or, negatively, an idea is not true if it does not work. This double formulation is of course too vague, because we must know the general context of the idea and all the relevant circumstances in relation to its working or not working.

Nonetheless, with these necessary qualifications, the "Does it work?" standard, which has become more or less idiomatic for most Americans, expresses fairly well in plain everyday terms the pragmatic theory of truth. Certain homely proverbs or maxims do likewise, such as the biblical "By their fruits ye shall know them"; "The proof of the pudding is in the eating"; "Handsome is as handsome does"; "Actions speak louder than words"; and "Check and double-check." Just as there is a significant continuity between ordinary common sense and scientific method, so there is also between common sense and the pragmatic notion of truth. This pragmatic conception brings truth down to earth, where it belongs; and it is

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democratic in that it removes theoretical barriers to the common man's attainment of knowledge.

In current political life the pragmatic criterion means that public officials, whether elected or appointed, must finally be judged not in terms of campaign promises and public speeches, but in terms of their concrete accomplishments, of the results that they achieve on behalf of the people. "Let's look at the record" was the effective way in which Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York used to express this principle. The pragmatic standard also implies that men in any walk of life should be evaluated on the basis of what they *do* and not of what they are *called*. This point takes on added importance in times of social crisis and tension when the tendency increases to discuss and dispose of the great questions of the day through the method of hurling epithets and smear-words.

The insistence that theories, hypotheses, ideas, concepts and programs must be proved correct in practice, strictly tested by means of empirical procedures controlled and carried through by human beings, goes hand in hand with the conviction that truth is objective and exists independently of our individual minds. Pragmatic proof is not a matter of mere personal, private experience or satisfaction, but an objective process operating on the principle that reliable knowledge is socially verifiable. As Dr. Abraham Edel phrases it, "To assert that a proposition is true means to predict its continued verification, its permanent presence within the body of acceptable knowledge. . . . To speak of truth as eternal is not necessarily to locate it outside of the changing world. It means in-

stead that continued testing of the proposition's consequences will continually confirm it."<sup>115</sup>

It is necessary to note that since ideas are meanings, the correspondence of truth to objective reality is not equivalent to a pictorial duplication of it, a photographic copy. The function of knowledge is not to reflect existence as in a mirror, but to gain increasing control over it on behalf of human purposes. A related philosophic error is to consider that human experience is primarily a matter of contemplation; to take the "spectator view" of knowledge, which derives to such a large extent from an over-emphasis on the role of vision. Truth-seeking and truth-using are both dynamic enterprises that must be carried through by doers rather than beholders.

Men are constantly changing and transforming Nature for their own ends. This transformation occurs not only through scientific controls and inventions as embodied in all sorts of economic and other familiar processes, but likewise in the very carrying out of scientific method in the laboratory and elsewhere. In their experiments scientists, in order to follow the lead and determine the consequences of some hypothesis, are continually manipulating physical materials, shifting the position and relations of objects, mixing things together in totally new combinations. Thus they experimentally alter some controlled and isolated sector of the environment as a way of discovering truth.

Completely exploded is the notion so long prevalent in philosophy and psychology that men acquire knowledge through the imprint of sensations upon the mind as if

upon a photographic plate. "According to this theory, mental life originated in sensations which are separately and passively received, and which are formed, through laws of retention and association, into a mosaic of images, perceptions and conceptions. . . . Except in combining atomic sensations, the mind was wholly passive and acquiescent in knowing. . . . The effect of the development of biology has been to reverse the picture. . . . Experience becomes an affair primarily of doing. The organism does not stand about, Micawberlike, waiting for something to turn up. It does not wait passive and inert for something to impress itself upon it from without."<sup>116</sup>

The general conception of knowledge that I am supporting received its first detailed treatment in modern times during the late nineteenth century at the hands of the American logician and scientist, Charles S. Peirce, who called his doctrine *Pragmatism*. William James further developed this theory, but pushed it to unacceptable and subjective extremes, as in his book *The Will to Believe*. John Dewey then took hold, corrected James' misconceptions and termed the result *Instrumentalism*, in order to avoid confusion and to bring out the instrumental, problem-solving character of human thought and knowledge. Professor Clarence I. Lewis, Harvard University's most brilliant philosopher, has worked through to a similar position, although he uses somewhat different technical terms.

Not all Humanists go along with me in supporting the pragmatic conception of knowledge, and controversy continues to rage over it. Very often, however, those who

criticize it and who say that Dewey's philosophy remains tainted by subjectivism themselves proceed on the basis of a pragmatic theory of knowledge. Like the logicians who cannot help using Aristotle's laws of thought in condemning those very laws, so the philosophers who condemn Dewey are prone to depend on the very pragmatic sanction that he upholds. Among Dewey's severest critics today, for instance, are the Marxists. Yet Lenin once stated that "practice alone can serve as a real proof." And one of America's leading Marxist philosophers, Dr. Selsam, attributes to Engels, and himself approves, the following view: "Practice lies at the root of all knowledge. Man learns through doing, through having to acquire objective knowledge of the real world to satisfy his needs. Practice is the test of truth. Just as knowledge begins with practice, so it is in practice that we prove the truth of our ideas."<sup>117</sup>

Selsam's statement makes plain, I think, that the pragmatic view of truth as developed in American philosophy and especially by John Dewey comes close to authoritative Marxist thought, though the Marxists hotly deny this. On the other hand, Dewey's own misconceptions are not to be overlooked. There is no doubt in my mind that he seriously misunderstands the practice of Marxism, particularly as evidenced in the Soviet Union. To put the situation in a nutshell, the Marxists do not seem able to understand Deweyan theory, while Dewey does not seem able to understand Marxian practice.

The fact is that neither the possession of a philosophically sound theory of knowledge nor a correct understand-



ing of scientific method, nor both together, is a guarantee that anyone will arrive at the truth in regard to any particular question. Serious mistakes can be made in the application of scientific method. Agreement that all hypotheses must be verified does not necessarily result in agreement as to the exact type or degree of evidence required in a specific case. In the sphere of the social sciences, especially, scientific method is still so lacking in precision that first-rate economists and sociologists often differ radically as to the right solution for some important problem. Trained thinkers who have established themselves as experts in one field of knowledge will turn out to be most unreliable in some other field of investigation or habitually scatterbrained in the conduct of their personal affairs.

Furthermore, scientific method as such is ethically and socially neutral. It has frequently operated on behalf of all sorts of anti-social ends such as aggressive war and the suppression of democracy. The Nazis utilized scientific method with great success in the waging of mechanized warfare. And when they set themselves the problem of how to exterminate the Jews of Europe, they used scientific techniques very efficiently to advance their hideous end. Again, it is scientific method that has discovered how to harness atomic energy to human purposes. Yet everyone knows that the most portentous question of the day is whether atomic energy will be applied constructively for the welfare of mankind or whether it will be applied destructively and transform the chief centers of modern civilization into smoking charnel-houses.

In short, reason and scientific method are not in themselves enough to achieve a Humanist world. Wielded by cold and cruel men in search of personal gain or by autocratic groups disdainful of the common good, science can lead to a veritable hell on earth. Only in the service of generous and humane ends does it fulfil its highest possibilities. For the Humanist, intellect and emotion, head and heart go together. Behind the scientist's pursuit of truth there must be emotional drive; and once a man is sure of a truth, it is right that it should command his emotional allegiance. To neglect either head or heart is to over-emphasize one of them at the expense of the other. Here we come back once more to the monistic psychology that sees man as a functioning unity of body and mind, feeling and thought. To conceive of human beings as mere thinking machines is as artificial and dangerous as to treat them as mere bundles of emotion. It is always the *whole* man with whom we have to deal.

The best safeguard for the proper use of science is that it should always go hand in hand with the methods and aims of democracy; its own general advancement, as we have seen, depends on democratic cooperation and verification. Humanism, then, firmly supports the use, development and extension of reason and scientific method, democratically conceived and directed, as mankind's greatest hope for successfully coping with its formidable problems; and as the only way of achieving that unity of theory and practice which has so long been a goal of philosophers.

## CHAPTER VI THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE

### 1. *The Ethics of Humanism*

In the Humanist ethics the chief end of thought and action is to further this-earthly human interests on behalf of the greater happiness and glory of man. The watchword of Humanism is service to humanity in this existence as contrasted with the salvation of the individual soul in a future existence and the glorification of a supernatural Supreme Being. Humanism urges men to accept freely and joyously the great gift of life and to realize that life in its own right and for its own sake can be as beautiful and splendid as any dream of immortality.

The philosophy of Humanism constitutes a profound and passionate affirmation of the joys and beauties, the braveries and idealisms of existence upon this earth. It heartily welcomes all life-enhancing and healthy pleasures, from the vigorous enjoyments of youth to the contemplative delights of mellowed age, from the simple gratifications of food and drink, sunshine and sports, to the more complex appreciation of art and literature, friendship and social communion. Humanism believes in the beauty of love and the love of beauty. It exults in the pure magnificence of external Nature. All the many-sided possibilities for good in human living the Humanist would

weave into a sustained pattern of happiness under the guidance of reason.

In this Humanist affirmation of life the monistic psychology again plays a most significant role. For this view means that in whatever he does man is a living unity of body and personality, an interfunctioning oneness of mental, emotional and physical qualities. Humanism adheres to the highest ethical ideals and fosters the so-called goods of the spirit, like those of culture and art and responsible citizenship. At the same time it insists that all ideals and values are grounded in this world of human experience and natural forms. As Santayana puts it in summing up his conception of human nature, "everything ideal has a natural basis and everything natural an ideal development."<sup>118</sup>

Much of the emphasis in supernaturalist ethics has been negative, calling on men continually to deny many of their most wholesome impulses in order to keep their souls pure and undefiled for that life after death which is so very much more important than life before death. In this ethics the prospect of supernatural rewards and punishments in the future overshadows present conduct; the values decreed by supernatural authority override those of the natural and temporal order in which man actually lives. The emphasis of Humanist and naturalistic ethics is *positive*, recommending the greater and more frequent enjoyment of earthly goods on the part of all men everywhere and unendingly. It is an ethics that repudiates ascetic other-worldliness in favor of buoyant this-worldliness. It is against all defeatist systems which

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either postpone happiness to an after-existence or recommend acquiescence to social injustice in this existence.

An excellent example of the typical religious defeatism that Humanism decries is the following consolation offered by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical of 1932, at the height of the Great Depression: "Let the poor and all those who at this time are facing the hard trial of want of work and scarcity of food, let them in a like spirit of penance suffer with greater resignation the privations imposed upon them by these hard times and the state of society, which Divine Providence in an ever-loving but inscrutable plan has assigned them. Let them accept with a humble and trustful heart from the hand of God the effects of poverty, rendered harder by the distress in which mankind now is struggling. . . . Let them take comfort in the certainty that their sacrifices and troubles borne in a Christian spirit will concur efficaciously to hasten the hour of mercy and peace."

Humanism sweeps aside the confusing and corrupting Dualism of the past in which "the natural life of man with its desires and pleasures became something to be shunned as evil and degraded, something to be forsaken for higher things. Man's true nature was of a different quality, his destiny lay in another realm. . . . It is this Dualism running through all of man's actions that has left its impress on the commonly accepted moral codes of the West to this day, and seems even yet to make impossible that whole-hearted and simple enjoyment of the goods of a natural existence that men now envy in the Greeks of old. It is not that men have ever refrained from action or

from these pleasures, but that they have never been able to rid themselves of the notion that there is something essentially wrong about them."<sup>119</sup>

The Humanist ethics is opposed to the puritanical prejudice against pleasure and desire that marks the Western tradition of morality. Men and women have deep-seated wants and needs of an emotional and physical character, the fulfilment of which is an essential ingredient in the good life of the rounded personality. Contempt for or suppression of normal desires results in their working themselves out in surreptitious, coarse or abnormal ways. While it is true that uncontrolled human desires are the prime cause of evil in the world, it is equally true that human desires directed by reason toward socially useful goals are the prime foundation of good. They provide the drive and the energy that eventuate in individual and group achievement in the good society.

The reasonable self-restraint that Humanism favors has little in common with the constant sense of guilt encouraged by the traditional Christian ethics. A central proposition in that ethics is the original sin and inherent wickedness of man; and one of its special stresses is that the sex impulse in human beings is essentially base and bad, Adam's original sin being transmitted from generation to generation through the act of procreation. Thus the Christian Church, in order to establish the complete purity of Jesus, felt obliged to assume that he was born of a virgin in violation of ordinary biological laws. Due in large part to the influence of Christianity, immorality in the minds of most people in the West became synony-

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mous with improper sex conduct.

Humanist ethics of course recognizes the necessity of high standards in relations between the sexes, but it does not regard sex emotions in themselves as in any sense evil. And it insists that from a moral viewpoint the sex life of an individual is no more important than his political or economic life. In fact, Humanism asserts that perhaps the most pressing ethical need of our time is the establishment of higher standards of action in the fields of politics and economics. A man can be an exemplary husband and father and at the same time be dishonest in business affairs or engage in political graft. Past over-emphasis on the sex aspect of morals has led to a neglect of its other aspects and a narrowing of its range.

The realm of ethics is pre-eminently social in scope and application; within its sphere lies all human conduct in which socially significant alternatives are possible. Many small everyday acts have no ethical significance, though any type of action may under certain circumstances carry such significance. In origin and development ethics is likewise social, the term itself coming from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning custom or usages. Ethical values and standards evolve in the interaction between individual and individual, between the individual and the group, and between group and group. The sympathetic impulses in human nature, such as the parental, the sexual and the gregarious, become socially transformed and broadened in human association.

The advantages of mutual cooperation, support and protection lead to the social functioning and utilization

of basic instincts such as those of self-preservation and reproduction. Conscience in human beings, the sense of right and wrong and the insistent call of one's better, more idealistic, more social-minded self, is a social product. Feelings of right and wrong that at first have their locus within the family gradually develop into a pattern for the tribe or city, then spread to the much larger unit of the nation, and finally from the nation to mankind as a whole. Humanism sees no need for resorting to supernatural explanations or sanctions at any point in the ethical process. A supernatural First Cause or Sustaining Principle is no more necessary in the sphere of ethics than in that of physics or cosmology.

In the making of ethical decisions the Humanist relies, as in any endeavor to solve a problem correctly, upon the use of reason approaching as closely as possible to the method of science, instead of upon religious revelation, or any sort of authority or intuition. For Humanism no human acts are good or bad in or of themselves. Whether an act is good or bad is to be judged by its consequences for the individual and society. Knowledge of the good, then, must be worked out, like knowledge of anything else, through the examination and evaluation of the concrete consequences of an idea or hypothesis. Humanist ethics draws its guiding principles *from* human experience and tests them *in* human experience. Since, as I pointed out in the last chapter, knowledge of anything is in the first instance never immediate, there can be no immediate knowledge of the right. However, once we have established or accepted a regulative principle of morality, we



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are able to *use* it immediately thereafter.

In Humanism's stress upon the need and value of intelligence in the ethical enterprise, its approach differs once again from that of the traditional Christian ethics. Though Humanism naturally incorporates certain of the generous social ideals voiced by Jesus, it finds little in the New Testament that can be considered as an appeal to reason. The appeal of Jesus was primarily designed to bring about a change in the heart of man; and this transformation was to be wrought by individuals receiving insight and inspiration from a personal God. Deeply imbedded in the Christian tradition was an antagonism toward the intellect, expressed originally in the myth that God punished Adam for disobeying the divine prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. And supernatural religions in general have been very distrustful of human reliance on reason. The ethical tradition in which the human mind, unprompted by any supernatural agency, was regarded as able to attain moral truth came down from ancient Greek philosophy, notably that of Aristotle, and from modern thinkers like Spinoza.

The Humanist submits every ethical precept of the past to the searching analysis of reason, forcing it to justify itself in the light of present circumstances. For Humanism well realizes that all ethical laws and systems are relative to the particular historical period and to the particular culture of which they are a part. What was good for the Old Testament Hebrews some 4,000 years ago or for the Greeks in 400 B.C. or for Europeans only 100 years ago is not necessarily good for Americans living in the fifth

decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in the world today there are a considerable number of different nations and peoples, some of them in quite dissimilar stages of historical development. It would not be fair to judge the Chinese altogether by American standards; and standards that we may take as ethically well established in the United States today may be in their formative phases in countries less developed in a cultural, economic and political sense. These remarks do not mean, of course, that moral standards are merely subjective or that we cannot learn a great deal from the ethical systems of the past.

Clearly, however, ethical rules of conduct become out-of-date as conditions change and time marches on. In general the advance of science and invention has affected ethical philosophy to an immense degree. Modern medicine, for instance, has demonstrated that many undesirable human traits which used to be ascribed to original sin or bad character are actually attributable to glandular insufficiencies or deep-seated emotional frustrations. The discovery and dissemination of scientific birth control techniques are naturally of vital significance in the sphere of sex morality. The growth of mechanized, urban civilization in recent centuries has both altered long-established ethical standards based on a primitive agricultural civilization and given rise to innumerable new ethical problems. A twentieth-century invention like the automobile demands a new and special code of ethics for the millions of drivers; reckless driving that threatens life and limb has become one of the major immoralities. This is a field

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in which the law rightly steps in to regularize and enforce proper standards of safety.

The multiplication of fresh ethical problems of a complex character in our present-day society shows the need not only for the moral flexibility that Humanism advocates, but also for the use of intelligence in determining what action or actions are right and good in each case. The function of basic moral principles, expressing the funded wisdom of human experience, is not to provide absolute rules of conduct that will automatically tell men just what to do under all circumstances. Their function "is to supply standpoints and methods which will enable the individual to make for himself an analysis of the elements of good and evil in the particular situation in which he finds himself."<sup>120</sup> That analysis should always take into consideration the surrounding circumstances, the total context of a specific situation.

Humanism teaches the formation of sound moral habits as well as of guiding moral principles, but believes that neither habits nor principles should grow too set or rigid. The highest ethical duty is often to discard the outmoded ethics of the past; it is a truism to say that the merely good is the enemy of the better. The Humanist refuses to accept any Ten Commandments or other ethical precepts as immutable and universal laws never to be challenged or questioned. He bows down to no alleged supreme moral authority either past or present.

This is one way in which the Humanist continually re-asserts the moral freedom that goes together with his moral responsibility. The act of willing this or that, of

choosing among various courses of conduct, is central in the realm of ethics. And I believe firmly that in making his ethical decisions, it is man's prerogative to have true freedom of choice. The chief reasons for this position I gave in Chapter IV. There are two main types of ethical decision in which human freedom functions. First, we have the situation in which one is sincerely perplexed over what is the right thing to do and chooses a certain line of action after considerable deliberation. Second, we have the situation in which one quickly realizes, from past experience, what one ought to do, but is tempted not to do it because some insistent personal desire points in a different direction. In this kind of situation the *I ought* implies the freedom of *I can, but need not*.

In the first type of case one of the most difficult classes of problems to settle revolves around the proper relationship between means and ends. The enunciation of ethical ideals is mere sentimentality unless effective means can be envisaged for eventually fulfilling them. It is the role of intelligence to formulate such means. Does this imply, then, that the end justifies the means? No, that is much too loose a generalization and is like asking "Is the object worth the price?"<sup>121</sup> It is impossible to give a meaningful answer to this very general question, unless we know the precise object that is under consideration and the exact price that is being demanded.

No responsible person really believes that *any* object justifies *any* price any more than he believes that *any* end justifies *any* means. But we can say, and everyone with an ounce of common sense must agree, that *some* objects

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justify *some* prices and that *some* ends justify *some* means. In getting at the ethical significance of a means-end situation it is always necessary to be specific and inquire, "Does this particular end or set of ends justify this particular means or group of means?"

In the realm of social tact and personal relations most of us do not hesitate to tell "white lies" occasionally in order to escape from the incessant interruptions of the telephone, the embarrassment of sudden and unexpected callers or the over-enthusiasm of friends or family in trying to draw us into this or that activity. Doctors also resort to white lies when they deceive a sick man as to the seriousness of his illness, in order to prevent worry and fear that might aggravate his condition. Thus white lies of one sort or another constitute a compromise with our ideals of honesty and an example of allowing certain ends to justify means that are ordinarily unacceptable.

To take a more important class of cases, consider the matter of violence and coercion. Is it justifiable to use the bad means of violence in order to further an end generally recognized as good? Well, even a professional pacifist would no doubt grant that it is legitimate to shoot a mad dog which is about to attack a small child. And most persons would not wish to advocate the disbanding of municipal police departments, even though policemen sometimes abruptly kill robbers or murderers who are escaping from the scene of a crime. In fact, our entire legal system depends in the last analysis upon the state's coercive powers of enforcement. Plainly, then, in the

present stage of civilization, force and the threat of force are ethically justifiable under certain circumstances.

Attempting to formulate a general rule, I would say that in judging whether any particular means is ethically justifiable for the accomplishment of a certain end, we must in the first place endeavor to estimate impartially the *total consequences* of using that means, including possible deleterious effects on the end desired. A certain means may well alter the very end for which it was brought into play; the question is precisely how and to what extent. A particular means may have unfortunate by-products and yet be justified because it achieves the main end in view. Even when a drastic means completely negates the desired end, as when a severe operation results in the death of the patient, we cannot necessarily conclude that the means was not justified.

This leads me to state, in the second place, that we cannot fairly evaluate the ethical implications of utilizing a specific means unless we consider the possible alternatives, unless we determine the probable consequences of *not* using that particular means. In many a case the best chance of saving a sick man from death is to take the risk of having him undergo a major operation. When it comes to broad social problems, unhappily we are not applying our means in a society that is already perfect; and as long as the system under which we live remains imperfect we cannot hope to change it through altogether perfect methods. Yet there are many amateur moralists in circulation who apparently do expect just that. With their extraordinary propensity for thinking in a vacuum, they set up

an ideal standard of conduct and then condemn anything that falls short of it, regardless of consequences and alternatives, regardless of how the actions both of unreliable friends and of unscrupulous enemies limit the means which individuals and groups can use with efficacy. Another way of expressing this point is to say that choosing the lesser evil sometimes results in the greater good.

What I have been saying implies a constant and close relationship between means and ends and a recognition that, in the main, means are just as important as ends. In fact, there is a continuous succession of means and ends; and a certain means is often so important that it becomes an end in itself, while an end achieved often becomes the means to another end beyond. A child goes to an elementary school as a means of becoming prepared for High School or private secondary school; but his work in the elementary school is of sufficient importance to make its successful conclusion a thoroughly worth-while end in itself. The boy then goes to High School, which is a means to entering college but also a significant end in itself. The young man's years at college, too, are both means and end: a means to his successful career in mature life and a most important end in the training of his mind and the broadening of his education.

Means and ends, then, together constitute essential stages in an onflowing continuum of activity that is literally endless. Their artificial separation accounts for much that is bad in present-day society. Perhaps the worst of such separations is between the average person's work and his life as a whole, the treating of his job as merely

instrumental to making money. Ideally, one's occupation should be significant and enjoyable in itself and thereby an end as well as a means. Much of the confusion regarding means and ends derives from the Christian tradition in which mundane life was regarded as a mere means, a toilsome pilgrimage, toward the supreme end of heavenly bliss.

We see a somewhat comparable split between means and ends when fanatics, frequently bursting with noble intentions, set up some far-off earthly end as all-important and try to persuade people to make literally everything they do subordinate, in the form of means, to this one goal. This leads to an extreme sort of future-worship and the neglect of men's present rights to happiness and their immediate opportunities for it. If human beings are to be happy and enjoy life, it must always be during some period of time describable as *now*. What the future-worshippers do is to ask each succeeding generation to sacrifice itself in working exclusively on behalf of a distant Utopia that may or may not some day arrive. The Humanist asserts that, from the viewpoint of human happiness and the sum total of good, today is just as significant as tomorrow and the current year just as significant as any a decade hence.

Another common but unacceptable cleavage in traditional ethics besides that between means and end is the cleavage between motive and act. Kant is the prototype of those philosophers who over-emphasize the matter of motives, since he sets up the possession of a good will, aside from the consequences of the acts for which it is respon-



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sible, as the test of goodness and makes the absolutely pure soul with pure motives the ideal of individual morality. This Kantian notion stems from a supernaturalistic, mind-body dualism and leads to the superficial doctrine that the re-making of society depends solely upon the moral regeneration of the individual as contrasted with systematic changes and reforms of an institutional character.

It would be likewise one-sided, however, to go to the other extreme from the Kantian ethics and claim that we can evaluate the ethical quality of a man through his overt actions alone. For intentions do enter as an important factor into the ethical significance of human conduct. The fact is that there is no sharp separation between motive and action; a total action consists of *both* the motive and the concrete act. This view is written into our accepted law. Thus an enormous difference exists, involving the imposition of the death penalty, between technical manslaughter, as when the driver of an automobile accidentally runs over and kills someone, and first-degree murder, as when a man kills with deliberate intent. On the other hand, by establishing the offense of criminal negligence, the law recognizes that absence of a bad motive is not always a sufficient excuse.

The reason why Humanism brings motives into the picture as an important element in any ethical situation is because of their over-all consequences. The animating and persistent dispositions of men, be these dispositions good or bad, lead on the whole to concrete actions and effects of a determinate nature. A person with the best of intentions may do something which accidentally injures others.

But we do not judge him entirely in terms of this one act, because his motives in general are of a sort that result in other acts and consequences which, broadly considered, seem conducive to the social welfare.

The attribution of low motives to people whose ideas or conduct you do not like is a favorite pastime throughout the world. It should be obvious, however, that it is rather difficult to gauge with accuracy the complex subjective states that lead a man to this or that action or opinion. Humanists, therefore, are chary of passing sweeping moral judgments on other people. Even the wisest of men hardly possesses the knowledge and impartiality to render a Last Judgment on himself or anyone else. Nevertheless, increasingly during these terrific times men adopt the attitude that those who differ with them on some current issue are absolute scoundrels and utterly damned. Yet needless to state, reasonable and morally worthy persons can sincerely disagree on the great controversies of the day. The average mind still being a somewhat imperfect instrument, even outright inconsistency is seldom a sure sign of hypocrisy. Intellectual intolerance and moral arrogance on the part of those who may themselves ultimately be proved mistaken are at the opposite pole from the true spirit of philosophy.

The whole question of motivation is fundamental to the Humanist philosophy. For one of the great aims of Humanism is the transformation and socialization of human motives. This is a sector where human nature can be drastically reconditioned and reshaped. What the scientific study of human motives shows is that human nature

is neither essentially bad nor essentially good, neither essentially selfish nor essentially unselfish, neither essentially warlike nor essentially pacific. There is neither original sin nor original virtue. But human nature is essentially flexible and educable. And the moulding or re-moulding of human motives is something that takes place not only in childhood and youth, but also throughout adult life and under the impact of those fundamental economic institutions and cultural compulsives that so weightily influence mind and character. The social development and conditioning of human beings, their training, direct and indirect, by means of all sorts of educational techniques, can be so extensive that the hoary half-truth, "You can't change human nature," becomes quite irrelevant.

Humanism believes that in ethical training, while sufficient attention must naturally be given to the process of self-cultivation, equal emphasis should be laid on the individual's relation to society, his unending debt to the collective culture of mankind and his corresponding obligation to serve the common good. Humanism holds that even the more highly developed intelligent self-interest, such as Plato discusses in his *Dialogues*, is not sufficient as an ultimate ethical sanction. For intelligence operating on behalf of an evil will is precisely the definition of Satan. A first-rate mind always acting at the behest of self-interest does not necessarily result in a person's furthering the welfare of the community. There may and do occur situations that ethically demand the very last measure of personal sacrifice and in which, therefore, no form of mere individual self-interest will be adequate. Neither the ca-

pable mind nor the good will acting alone and in isolation can be depended upon for genuine ethical achievement; both functioning together make the ideal partnership from the Humanist standpoint.

The theory that everyone invariably acts from self-interest, direct or indirect, is psychologically unsound. The simple fallacy behind that theory consists, as Dr. Dewey states, "in transforming the (truistic) fact of acting *as* a self into the fiction of always acting *for* self."<sup>122</sup> Now obviously a man does act frequently on behalf of himself alone; but also he can and does act on behalf of other people and large social objectives. He may well obtain personal satisfaction in so doing, but the gaining of that satisfaction is not necessarily his original and primary goal.

There are many situations demanding courage or heroism in which a man has time to think through the main implications and consequences before taking action. If his final decision involves his risking or even giving up his life in a good cause, you may say that he is pursuing his self-interest because he is a believer in supernatural religion and expects to receive his reward in heaven. Traditional Christianity has indeed preached and encouraged a self-interest ethics in this sense of building up credits for an after-existence. But suppose the individual has no faith in immortality and yet follows a course that he knows is quite certain to end his earthly career. How can we possibly reduce to self-interest his decision to surrender what he considers his one and only life?

In fact, throughout history and especially during mod-

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ern times, there have been millions of men and women with some sort of Humanist philosophy who have consciously given up their lives for a social ideal. Of course they have wanted to devote themselves to that ideal and have been willing to make the supreme sacrifice for it. Yet because an individual desires to do a thing does not prove at all that he desires to do it from mere self-interest. In the case of dying for a cause, such as the welfare of his country or of humanity, he may truly desire the good of country or mankind above everything else, even above his own self-preservation. Or in the narrower setting of close personal relationships a man may care for his wife, his child or his friend literally more than he cares for himself.

Intense interest in other people or in society as a whole is, to be sure, an interest manifested by a self, but that does not make it synonymous with self-interest. To call genuine self-sacrifice or patriotism or public service forms of self-interest is to stretch the connotation of *self-interest* to cover its opposite, so that it loses its distinctive meaning. And there can be no doubt that much of the age-long controversy on this subject of self-interest has been due to verbal confusion and to the illegitimate practice of the self-interest school in trying to get rid of altruism by defining it out of existence.

The self-interest theory has been closely tied up in the history of thought with the ethical view that pleasure is and should be the goal of human endeavor. This pleasure ethics is founded on a false analysis of human nature. For scientific psychology demonstrates that we do not in the

first instance desire an object because it gives us pleasure, but that it gives us pleasure because we desire it. We enjoy a tender, well-cooked steak because we desire it in terms of bodily need and hunger; if we are already satiated with food, we have no appetite for a steak. It is really objects that we immediately desire, the accompanying pleasure being a welcome by-product and a sign that the object is one that we fundamentally want, something that is basically congenial to our nature. Feelings of pleasure cannot be automatically produced, since they are inseparably bound up with our experiencing of objects that are agreeable to us and that we positively desire only under certain conditions. This is a decisive reason why the direct and self-conscious pursuit of pleasure is not likely to succeed and to bring lasting satisfaction.

Applying this analysis to the larger problem of ethical reflection and decision in regard to the general good, we see that an individual certainly possesses the psychological power of setting up social aims as among his primary objects of desire; the pleasure or happiness that may result from his furthering those aims is then secondary and derivative. Thus Humanism affirms the psychological possibility and the ethical desirability of intelligent altruism. There is nothing more shallow than those sophisticians who insist on reducing all human conduct to personal self-interest and who persist in saying that egoism is more "natural" than altruism. Neither egoism nor altruism is an original characteristic of human nature; both, however, are potential dispositions of the personality. Thinkers who claim that complete selfishness is an inborn quality of

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human beings are taking over and expressing in different language one of the great errors of Christian ethics, namely that man is inherently sinful and depraved.

The more extreme forms of self-interest are, in truth, equivalent to ordinary selfishness, in which there is a deficiency of consideration for others and in which an individual fulfils his needs and desires to the detriment of someone else. Obviously self-regard in the sense of keeping healthy, acquiring an education, earning a living and finding a congenial life partner of the opposite sex is something to be encouraged. Self-cultivation in general and during youth in particular is by no means opposed to the social good; indeed, it helps to build a personality which can thereby render greater service to society. Similarly a sense of personal pride in fine workmanship redounds to the advantage of the community. It is not Humanism's intent that an individual should belittle the value of his own self in affirming that of other selves.

The significant point ethically speaking is not the truism that it is always some self that has interests; it is the *kind* of interests that any self has. The self or personality is not a fixed, simple and ready-made entity standing behind a man's activities and directing them; that idea is a holdover from the supernatural doctrine of a divinely created soul — complete in all essentials — entering the body from on high. The human personality is a fluid, developing, growing complex of habits, impulses, and ideas that is never finished and is always in the making *through* its activities and interests.

The unity of the self is not something one starts with,

but something one may achieve, and even then only in a relative sense. Of course the self can change for the worse as well as for the better. In any case the range and quality of an individual's interests come to define in large measure the nature of his self. A man *is* what he does and likes to do. The Humanist concept of a growing, expanding personality, which comes to include social aims and ideals as an integral part of the self, cancels out the false antithesis of the individual *versus* society.

The concept of an always selfish self is a cultural product and today goes hand in hand with a social system that sets up economic self-interest in the form of money-making and profit-making as the primary motive capable of stimulating men to productive effort. In philosophy the self-interest theory of ethics received its most precise and mature formulation in the writings of the nineteenth-century Utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. In this regard their work, though quite humanistic in its total effect, was the philosophic counterpart of the profit-motive theory of Adam Smith and other exponents of laissez-faire economics.

In America's present capitalist society, with its constant emphasis on the profit motive and competitive individualism, there is a tendency to look upon those who support a broader and more scientific view of human motivation as intellectual crack-pots; and to consider those who try to practice altruism as impossibly naive or afflicted with a martyr complex. Amateur psychoanalysts and half-baked Freudians are fond of explaining away manifestations of social idealism in terms of some obscure



neurosis. They assume that normal people function on the basis of self-interest and that therefore militant social idealism must be due to peculiar quirks in the human personality. Yet it is obviously fantastic to maintain that a deep desire for social justice, any more than a passion for truth, necessarily springs from some sort of personal neurosis or maladjustment.

Despite its criticism of the self-interest morality, the ethics of Humanism is cognizant of how deeply rooted in our economic and cultural situation are both the theory and practice of crude self-interest. Humanism is realistic in that it fully recognizes to what an extent men are bent in a wrong direction by propaganda and cultural conditioning which appeal to, reinforce and spur on the selfish and violent impulses. Humanism is further realistic in understanding that in the last analysis "the refutation of egoism consists in the *eradication* of egoism, that is, changing the actual feelings, desires and attitudes of those who are egoists."<sup>123</sup> This clearly cannot be done simply by trying to preach, talk and argue men out of habits and actions that run counter to the social good.

Hence Humanism considers it most essential to carry through a systematic and skilful program of training the motives and the emotions so that the social and sympathetic tendencies of human beings will be encouraged rather than the more egoistic ones. Without exception the great thinkers on the subject of morality have agreed that a cardinal aim of ethical education is to develop men and women who find pleasure and happiness in doing right, and pain and unhappiness in doing wrong. Social con-

ditioning, working upon plastic human nature with all the new techniques of twentieth-century teaching, communication and advertising, can accomplish wonders either for good or for bad.

The role of reason in this situation is not to act as a force contrary to the emotions and to assume the impossible task of driving them out or suppressing them; that would be partly to adopt the ethics of the old supernaturalism. The function of individual and community intelligence is to re-direct emotional life and to replace anti-social passions, motives, ambitions and habits by those that are geared to the common good. Even those deep-seated tendencies of hate and aggression that psychoanalysts say practically all human beings harbor within can be harnessed to a constructive purpose and directed against such evils as poverty, disease, tyranny and war.

In Humanism's general scheme of education nothing is more important from an ethical viewpoint than teaching boys and girls, men and women, how to reason correctly and use their minds to handle the myriad problems of life. Such teaching must be aware that reason is "not a ready-made antecedent which can be invoked at will and set into movement. . . . It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires . . . a laborious achievement of habit needing to be continually worked over."<sup>124</sup> The irrational impulses of human beings have played an enormous role in bringing recurring disasters upon mankind and remain a sinister danger in contemporary affairs. For the Humanist, stupidity is just as great a sin as self-

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ishness; and "the moral obligation to be intelligent" ranks always among the highest of duties.

### 2. *The Social Good and Individual Happiness*

Humanists are clear and certain that the social good, which is inclusive of all humanity, is the supreme ethical goal; but they realize that it is not a goal to which they can win assent through means of mere logic. The truth is that the desirability of working for the social good as the great human end is not something that can be proved like a mathematical proposition. It is a sweeping ethical *assumption*, as important in its field as the scientific assumption of the Uniformity of Nature. Humanism consciously makes this ethical assumption, tries to persuade men in general to make it, and advocates the kind of education that will naturally lead them to make it. Hence it favors the development of those basic impulses of friendliness and cooperation that impel a person to consider constantly the group good and to find his own happiness in working for the happiness of all.

As I have already pointed out, an individual's loyalty to the larger social good may under certain circumstances cost him his very existence or at least considerable suffering. We must frankly admit that a man's uncompromising dedication to the happiness of others may lead to unhappiness on his part. A pure conscience is not in itself sufficient to offset the persecution of governments or the cruelty of tyrants. As Aristotle sensibly observed in his notable book, *The Nicomachean Ethics*: "To assert that

a person on the rack, or a person plunged in the depth of calamities, is happy is either intentionally or unintentionally to talk nonsense."<sup>125</sup>

On the whole, however, a society in which most individuals, regardless of the personal sacrifices that may be entailed, are devoted to the collective well-being, will attain greater happiness and make more progress than one in which private self-interest and advancement are the prime motivation. This is so for three main reasons. First, a society of truly cooperative and socially conscious individuals will be able to achieve and maintain those higher material and cultural levels that provide the broadest foundation for human happiness and progress.

Second, a cooperative society fits in with and fulfils some of the fundamental aspects of human nature. Man, like the Higher Primates from which he is descended, is a gregarious creature and, as Aristotle noted long ago, "a political animal." We are *social* beings; and though we can artificially set ourselves apart from the world, we are essentially and always part of the surrounding matrix of human society. Generally speaking, men experience their deepest and most enduring joys, not as solitary hermits on some mountain top or desert isle, but in association with their fellow-citizens, their friends or their family. Even simple sex love, since its fulfilment requires two parties, is primarily a social experience.

Third, loyalty to a worth-while social aim can bring stability and harmony into men's lives. Such a loyalty gives them a central and absorbing purpose around which they are able to integrate their personalities and construc-

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tively organize their day-to-day and year-to-year existence. Allegiance to the social good serves as a beacon that illuminates to some degree most of life's problems. Such an allegiance widens an individual's interests and carries him beyond himself, leading him to subordinate or even forget petty personal desires and troubles in the cause for which he is fighting. It releases untapped energies and enables a man to feel success in the accomplishments of others as well as his own; to experience the warm glow of fellowship with like-minded men and women who share in the ups and downs of the common struggle.

I cite at this point two authorities nineteen centuries apart. "This is the true joy in life," writes George Bernard Shaw, "the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."<sup>126</sup> And Jesus said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."<sup>127</sup>

The individual, under whatever sky and no matter what his work or where he stands on the ladder of achievement, infuses his life with meaning through his devotion and contribution to the larger social good. The vast complexities and impersonal functioning of modern society have

led to a feeling of insignificance and impotence on the part of millions of people. The insane asylums are over-run with persons who try to boost their egos by imagining that they are famous historical characters. And contemporary psychiatrists and psychoanalysts frequently discover that the mental troubles of their patients are traceable to a persistent belittling of their egos. The average man has a deep-seated need of assurance that his activities are of some social usefulness and importance.

Humanism does not for a moment imply that *any* social goal which evokes loyalty in an individual is worth-while, because then, for example, Fascist loyalty to an evil cause would have to be considered a good. To guard against such confusion and to know what we really mean we must always assign concrete content to our social aims. While it is necessary to use a shorthand term such as *the social good* or *the general welfare* to sum up Humanism's ultimate ethical objective, it is equally necessary to break down that objective in terms of specific goods. Thus the social good surely entails such values for the individual as health, economic security, friendship, sex love, educational opportunity, a developed intelligence, courage, generosity, freedom of speech, cultural enjoyment, a sense of beauty, and opportunity for recreation. Here are twelve major goods that any rational society would presumably attempt to encourage and establish; and an inclusive list would contain many more. A knowledge of how different goods or values of this sort are inter-related is an indispensable factor in ethical analysis.

There often occurs a clash between acknowledged

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goods in which one good must be temporarily sacrificed for another. As Hegel once observed, "Tragedy is the conflict, not of right and wrong, but of right and right." Our interest in human progress may at times be at variance with our concern for the present happiness of men. The dilemma of our obligations to future generations versus our obligations to the present generation always remains something of a problem. Conflicts between two compelling goods we must resolve as best we can in the light of intelligence and of the broadest and most permanent synthesis of values that is possible.

Turning now to a more detailed analysis of individual human happiness, we can state that happiness is not properly definable in terms of the glorified heavenly rest-home or of the passive contemplation so common to the supernaturalist tradition. Nor is it to be defined as withdrawal from the world in this life and retreat to some ivory tower of art or reflection. Such ideals of happiness are escapist dreams originating to a large extent in bad social conditions where most work is drudgery, where human living and its environment lack aesthetic quality and where in general the struggle to maintain life at a decent level is too hard.

The fact is that men are inherently active beings and will therefore discover happiness only in some form of action. The most pathetic sight on earth is not the tired businessman, but the *retired* businessman. He is restive and dissatisfied because suddenly he finds himself with nothing to do. No one can long remain content merely in contemplating past successes. In truth the entire universe,

from atoms to stars, is naturally and eternally active. From an ethical viewpoint, the human character can never stand still because continual change is part of its own nature and resides in the very constitution of things.

Happiness, however, does not consist in activity as such or simply in the attainment of one object of desire after another. This is why we so often have that empty feeling after accomplishing some difficult end upon which we have set our hearts; why the thrill of achievement can give way so quickly to the blankness of boredom. The Humanist conclusion is that the attainment of desired objects and objectives is not in itself sufficient for human happiness, but is a necessary means to the "removal of obstructions to an ongoing, unified system of activities,"<sup>128</sup> as Dewey describes it. Hence the final goal of human striving is unity, satisfaction, equilibrium *in* activity. The path to happiness lies through *harmony in action*; through the personality's continued moral and intellectual growth; through its achievement of a *dynamic* rather than a static harmony. In this wise the mind, which is in essence a problem-solving instrument, keeps on meeting the challenges of the environment and stays alert to the end instead of sinking into semi-somnolent quiescence.

This conception of happiness is grounded in a psychology that allows plenty of scope for the natural differences between individuals and for the potentialities of each person. Since no man can possibly fulfil the numberless potentialities of his being, particularly in our many-sided culture of today, he must select a consistent combination of activities upon which he centers his life. The well-



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rounded and maturely developed personality is not that of the dilettante scattering himself aimlessly and endlessly in different directions, but is one which attains a concentrated harmony. The role of the intellect in this process is most important since it serves to discriminate among the thousand and one impulses and desires of an individual, acting as a moderator. In this sense the mind is like the conductor of an orchestra and is able to harmonize an individual's life in terms of some predominant purpose.

The dynamic harmony that Humanism advocates does not imply a super-strenuous existence, though it has a place for excitement and adventure and zestful living. In brief, it does full justice to the varying aspects of human nature and fits in well with the monistic psychology of unity between the personality and the body. Thus it corrects the over-emphasis on certain mental and spiritual qualities so characteristic of the dualistic and supernaturalistic ethics. Humanism is opposed to all philosophies that cut man in two, figuratively speaking, and so result in a truncated version of human nature.

It is likewise opposed to the general tendency of philosophers, even those whose metaphysics is naturalistic and humanistic, to put undue stress on the intellectual life to the neglect of the emotional. Western philosophy, for instance, has traditionally slighted the value of love between man and woman. Humanist ethics, on the other hand, believes that sex love, a democratic value *par excellence* in that it can be experienced by everyone, is not to be assessed less highly than intellectual achievement,

artistic creation or any other recognized good. In reference to sexual relations the monistic psychology again makes clear that there is no sharp separation in emotional life between the physical and the spiritual, and that love at its best represents a pervasive intermingling of the two.

The Humanist aim of harmony in human living includes the ancient ideal of "a sound mind in a sound body." Nobody has ever improved upon this classic formulation, though we might express the thought somewhat differently. "Mental and bodily health" or "mental and bodily normality" or "psychological and physiological health" all represent the same idea. While of course individual happiness is in the last analysis a subjective thing, we do know that it is furthered by a vigorous and healthy functioning of the whole organism. And for mental and bodily health we can set up relatively objective norms statable and measurable by science.

There are certain material conditions that must be considered minimum requirements for physical health, such as good food, good air, good housing, sufficient clothing, adequate medical care, and ample exercise and recreation. Obviously if we are to guarantee to everyone in the community, all the millions of workers in factory and field, the prerequisites of bodily health, we shall have to make extensive changes in our economic system. We shall have to eliminate economic depressions and mass unemployment, raise immensely the general standard of living, cut down on the hours of work and lengthen vacations, and rebuild most of our urban and rural areas on the basis of intelligent planning.

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Humanism insists on the ethical relevance of good economic conditions. The abundant life for the individual goes hand in hand with an economy of abundance. Except for the infinitesimal part of its career represented by a few countries during the past century or so, mankind has always had to face the crushing hardships of an economy of scarcity and the ruinous blasts of a Nature mighty and untamed. Today, however, with our scientific techniques and machine civilization, there is little excuse for not adequately controlling Nature and making available to everybody a high standard of living. In the tremendous potentialities of a modern technology utilized on behalf of all humanity, the Humanist can glimpse the actualization of his forward-looking social program.

In general the first necessity for mental health is precisely the sound bodily health that I have already discussed. In addition, there are certain other essential or at least contributing conditions, such as satisfaction in one's work, psychological security, freedom from fear and anxiety, normal sex fulfilment, pleasant social contacts, opportunity for cultural interests, and an inclusive philosophy of life, of which Humanism itself is one type. It is in the broad field of mental health or normality that the infant sciences of psychoanalysis and psychiatry have their special part to play. These professions not only require considerable development in consistency of methods and exactness of standards, but also much widening of facilities so that their complicated techniques of diagnosis and cure can be made available at reasonable prices to all in need of them.

Again, the establishment of the full prerequisites of mental health for the masses of the people implies far-reaching improvements in the very foundations of our existing society. There cannot, for example, be much feeling of psychological security in a world where economic crisis is an ever-present threat; or in a world where international war periodically engulfs mankind, with entire peoples subject to terrifying and devastating air-raids, slaughter by the millions and nation-wide starvation. The current danger of a third world war, in which atom bombs and bacteriological warfare would probably play pre-eminent roles, makes the situation more alarming than ever before.

In the face of all the international misunderstandings and tensions of the present age, Humanism stands firm in its vision of the social good as including the entire human race. As my sixth point in the Humanist program phrases it, this philosophy "holds as its highest loyalty the this-worldly happiness, freedom and progress — economic, cultural and ethical — of all mankind, irrespective of nation, race or religion." While the sincere Humanist strives to the best of his ability to further the good of his family, his local community — city, town or village — his state and his nation, he is continually looking beyond his native land to the world at large and thinking about the well-being of all the peoples of the earth.

In the days of the American Revolution Thomas Paine stated: "All mankind are my brethren; to do good is my religion." Later, in the Civil War era, William Lloyd Garrison said: "My country is the world; my countrymen

are mankind." These are statements in the true Humanist spirit. On the other hand, I believe that Humanists should not become sentimental about humanity as a whole. I would reserve the word *love* for the intimate attachments of family and friendship, using the word *sympathy* to express our feelings of good will toward our fellow-men in general.

While there need be no inconsistency between the welfare of city and nation, or between that of nation and humanity, conflicts can and do arise between narrower and broader ethical ends of this kind. Certain forms of modern nationalism, fanatical, intolerant, militaristic and contemptuous of foreign peoples, amount in essence to the large-scale organization of egotism. They clearly clash with the ideals of Humanism and put current meaning into Dr. Samuel Johnson's remark that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Yet to love one's country does not really imply that one must hate other countries or adopt the slogan "My country right or wrong." The principle around which the United Nations and the International Court of Justice are organized is that the scope of national sovereignty must be curtailed and that nations must be willing to accept, as against what they conceive to be their own self-interest, the democratically arrived at decisions of the world community.

Like all other influential religions and philosophies, Humanism reserves the moral right to disagree with or defy any existing governmental or other authority. The final court of appeal for the Humanist is his own conscience and intelligence, as developed in the light of Humanist

ethics. The Humanist stands ready to take the consequences and pay the price of his integrity and his ultimate loyalties. As the brave and militant hero of a recent novel said just before a band of Fascist terrorists snuffed out his life: "Beneath all else is this: A man must hold to his purpose. This — nothing less — is the underground stream of his life. Without it he is nothing. I cannot yield! A man is nothing who yields his purpose."<sup>129</sup>

I spoke earlier about the fact that ethical systems are relative to specific social and economic conditions. Notwithstanding this relativity, Humanism is able to take over from past systems and adapt to current situations significant elements that are still relevant to human living today. The Stoic ethics, for example, with its ideal of fortitude under all circumstances, is one of the noblest in the history of thought and can teach us a great deal. The emphasis of Stoicism on courage, as distinct from the fatalistic strain in that philosophy, points to an essential value that any rounded ethics should encourage. For both society as a whole and the individuals within it must be prepared to go through periods of stress and strain and to face emergencies with a valorous spirit and resolute will. Even during days that are relatively quiet and peaceful in a political sense the individual may have need of the Stoic attitude in confronting personal misfortune of one sort or another. Such might be a serious and crippling accident, sudden death in one's family or one's own impending doom from an incurable disease.

Humanism can also draw to some extent on the Epicurean ethics, which in ancient Greece of the fourth cen-

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tury B.C. was a rival of the Stoic viewpoint. Epicurus believed that present pleasure was the chief end of life, but taught the ethical desirability of seeking the more cultured pleasures, such as those of friendship, of the mind and of art. He stood for the higher hedonism and for retirement from the world when things are going to rack and ruin. I have already criticized as unsound the ethics of setting up pleasure-seeking as the supreme human aim. Epicureanism does remind us, however, that the enjoyment of pleasure is one of the great values, in contra-distinction to the dominating tradition in the West which has given pleasure a bad name and has associated it primarily with sensual satisfactions.

The Epicurean ethics, like the Stoic, was designed to meet the challenge of social breakdown and hard times; and so it is understandable why it recommended an individual quietism of minimizing desire to conform with the attainable. Humanism advocates the maximizing of social cooperation to expand the possibilities of individual fulfillment; its attitude is one of activism as contrasted with passivity. Yet without ever being submissive the Humanist can accept the general proposition that individual harmony, and social cooperation itself, demand the renunciation of some desires and the strict control of others. As to withdrawal from the world, that too can be a good if it represents a temporary move to refresh the spirit and restore the physique rather than a permanent attitude of disdain, disillusionment or defeat.

Humanist ethics can profitably assimilate the deep ethical wisdom that is part of many other philosophies be-

sides those I have specifically mentioned. In this section, however, I am not trying even to survey, much less to analyze in detail, the great ethical systems of the past and present. Rather, I am merely indicating the method of Humanism in merging into its own ethics what is sound and pertinent from thinkers who belong to both the non-Humanist and the Humanist traditions. For a reliable and over-all treatment of the ethical enterprise, from a viewpoint that is generally humanistic and naturalistic, the reader must go to a book such as *Ethics* by Professors John Dewey and James H. Tufts.

To conclude our discussion of ethics, if a man really believes seriously in the Humanist end of the happiness, freedom and progress of all humanity and keeps that ideal constantly in mind, he will never lose sight of the wide synthesis of values for which Humanism stands. That supreme synthesis can perhaps best be described as a greater and greater sharing of the good things of this life on the part of more and more persons in every country. This means nothing more nor less than democracy in its most meaningful and far-reaching sense. For Humanists the familiar formula of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" expresses the merging of an ethical and a democratic ultimate. Humanism implements its ethics, and meets the danger of mere lip-service to noble-sounding professions, by offering a program of *action* in terms of the democratic way of life.

### 3. *Humanism and Democracy*

The most effective manner of summarizing the social



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and economic aims of Humanism is to say that this philosophy supports the widest possible extension of democracy to all relevant aspects of human living. An ever increasing participation by human beings throughout the earth in the abundant goods of this existence defines democracy as a goal in its most inclusive signification. This Humanist conception incorporates earlier contributions to the democratic ideal such as the stirring formulation, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," of the French Revolution.

Democracy is of course a method as well as a goal. It is the most intelligent method of conducting political life, of carrying through social changes and of settling disagreements in the realm of public affairs. The Life of Reason, the appeal to the supreme court of the mind, for which philosophy stands, implies in its very essence peaceful persuasion through the free exchange and competition of ideas in the wide arena of thought. The philosophic ideal is the transformation of our bitter social and economic disputes into great Platonic Dialogues carried on in legislative bodies and the organs of public opinion — dialogues, however, that in due course have a definite outcome and therefore do not end as inconclusively as some of those in which Socrates took part.

Humanism's support of the democratic way is a matter of both idealism and realism. To quote Professor Reinhold Niebuhr's acute epigram, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."<sup>130</sup> Democracy is a comparatively new thing in the world; and a very radical

thing. Violence, bloodshed, coercion and war—both civil and international—are the old, traditional methods of resolving deep-going conflicts of opinion and interest. Such methods have been wasteful, in terms of human life and economic dislocation, beyond all computation. Often they have succeeded only in curing one evil by substituting another.

A true democracy welcomes differences and disagreements and cherishes as a creative force in society minority criticisms of existing institutions and prevailing patterns of thought. The democratic spirit is not dogmatic and recognizes the value of constant challenges to basic assumptions. The crack-pot may turn out to be the trail-blazer; the genius usually starts his career by being a dissident minority of one. Humanism itself, as a minority position at present, has the obligation to defend democracy as a matter of both philosophic principle and sheer self-interest. Only if the channels of opinion are kept open can a viewpoint like that of Humanism hope to win a majority in the nation and the world.

Humanism, then, urges complete democracy as both an end and a means. And for Humanism, with its naturalistic cosmology, the idea of democracy has developed in history in a purely humanistic way, needing no support or sanction in supernatural revelations or metaphysical guarantees. The Humanist requires no cosmic spokesman to inform or remind him of the dignity of man and the ideal of human brotherhood. The most democratic countries certainly are not and have not been those most steeped in supernatural religion. Humanist belief in democracy as

the goal and in democratic processes as the method is not derivative from extra-human sources; it stands on its own feet.

Unfortunately, *democracy* has today become one of those vague and infinitely ambiguous terms that defy the dictionaries, confound the statesmen and confuse the people. Yet it remains a good and useful word. And an essential task of Humanism as a philosophy is to clarify the meaning of an important idea like that of democracy. One helpful way of doing this is to break down this very general concept into various categories, to think of democracy in its specific applications. Thus I find that there are at least twelve different types of democracy, all inter-related and to some extent overlapping, but all capable of differentiation from one another.

First, there is *political democracy*, that is, government of, by and for the people under republican or parliamentary institutions. In a democracy the State is the servant of the people and is controlled by them. Political democracy includes the right of free elections, of majority rule, of major and minor political parties. It covers the right of universal suffrage for everyone above the age of 18 or 21, without restrictions of an economic, racial, sex or religious nature. Political democracy also comprises pertinent and proper regulations, established by the people, for the election of legislative representatives, for the election or appointment of public officials, and for the general functioning of the commonwealth. In America the federal Constitution and the state constitutions are to a large

degree concerned with the machinery of democratic government.

Though a democracy must proceed on the basis of majority decisions, it has the obligation of fully protecting the rights of minorities. The principle of majority rule cannot be maintained unless adequate and fair opportunity is given for the evolution of minorities, new or old, into majorities. One of the most essential disciplines for true democrats to learn is to accept the results of the ballot and to live under officials whom they oppose and with decisions that have gone against them. Political democracy is of course negated if corrupt bosses and machines manipulate elections, if powerful behind-the-scenes lobbies control legislation or if millions of voters are disfranchised, as they are in the southern states of the U.S., through the poll tax, the white primary or other inequitable devices.

Second, as an outstanding aspect of democracy, there are *civil liberties*. Civil liberties are usually subsumed under political democracy, but they are so extremely important that I am setting them up as a separate category. In the United States our basic civil liberties are outlined in the federal Constitution, primarily under Articles I and IV of the Bill of Rights. There the American people are guaranteed freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of assembly, and of petitioning the Government "for a redress of grievances." They are also to be secure "against unreasonable searches and seizures."

These original guarantees have been greatly broadened and complicated in recent decades by the development of

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new and potent media for the transmission of ideas, such as the motion picture, the radio, and newspapers with a mass circulation; by the growth of monopolies in these same fields of communication; and by the increasing strength and scope of the labor movement. For instance, the courts have in general construed the right of peaceful picketing as an extension of freedom of the press. Whatever sphere of thought, opinion or propaganda we consider, there can be no doubt that civil liberties are a mighty bulwark for unpopular minority groups and unorthodox individuals; and against the caprices of temporary majorities, public officials, or local prejudice.

Since the end of the Second World War a dangerous and widespread movement has taken place in the United States to abrogate or abridge the ordinary civil rights of individuals and groups who do not conform to prevailing patterns of opinion. Reminiscent of the reactionary years following the First World War, this anti-democratic campaign has made headway under the guise of fighting Communism and Communists and controlling trade unions and labor leaders. One of the most forbidding features of the situation is that elected or appointed government officials have encouraged this campaign and in many ways have actually led it.

For example, the Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives, composed of nine Congressmen, has flagrantly violated civil liberties and constitutional privileges in its frantic attempt to destroy the reputation and obstruct the functioning of individuals and organizations that it accuses of the vague

and indefinable crime of being "un-American" or "subversive." The unfair and unrestrained procedures of this Committee, including the unscrupulous use of publicity, permit the character assassination of those who are called before it, and transform representative government into government by misrepresentation.<sup>131</sup> President Truman's Executive Order of 1947 demanding that all federal employees, more than two million in number, undergo loyalty tests to establish their fitness to work in the Government violates constitutional procedures and has created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear throughout America and especially in Washington, D. C.

The unprecedented action of the major motion picture companies in deciding to discharge all so-called "subversives" and "Communists" in the industry points toward the possible extension of the anti-Communist hysteria throughout American economic life. It is clear that the American Bill of Rights can be subverted not only through outright suppression of minorities, but also by means of political intimidation and economic coercion. The fact is that many of America's most powerful figures in politics and business, when it comes to their attitude toward groups and persons with whom they disagree, continually act as if they had never read the American Constitution or did not care about it. One of the crying needs of the day is that officials of federal, state and city governments in the U.S.A., as well as leaders in other walks of life, should abide by the Constitution and cease holding the Bill of Rights in contempt. Attempted thought-control by either governmental or non-governmental bodies is utterly

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at variance with the American democratic tradition.

Third, there is *democracy under the law*, the assurance that all members of the community will receive fair and equal treatment by the courts and the officials entrusted with enforcement of the law. This type of democracy can logically be classified as a sub-section of either political democracy or civil liberties. But I believe that it deserves a category of its own. Again, the United States Constitution lays down the pertinent rules and regulations, like the right of habeas corpus, of a speedy and public trial, of a jury trial in general, and of reasonable bail and fines. Four sections in the Bill of Rights, Articles V-VIII, work out in some detail such fundamental provisions of legal equality, and of the guarantee that no person shall "be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law."

Democracy under the law is basic in a democratic state. Ideally, it protects impartially the just interests of all individuals and groups, no matter what their political or economic viewpoints. As the Supreme Court stated in 1940: "Under our constitutional system, courts stand against any winds that blow as havens of refuge for those who might otherwise suffer because they are helpless, weak, outnumbered, or because they are nonconforming victims of prejudice and public excitement."<sup>132</sup>

When private citizens or competing groups are unable themselves to adjust their disagreements, they can take their cases to the courts of justice. Resort to the courts is the most common way in a democratic country of settling disputes that require the intervention of some public

authority as referee. In America the courts often have the final word because of their power to void legislation or administrative acts as violating the Constitution. Of course judges like other people have their own personal opinions and prejudices; and these are sure to color their decisions to some extent. The functioning of even-handed justice for all is also handicapped by disproportionate financial means among the population to hire able lawyers, to put up cash or bonds for bail, and to meet the cost of appeals to the higher courts.

Most Americans have been prone to think of democracy mainly in terms of these first three forms of political democracy, civil liberties and democracy under the law, which center around the functionings of representative government and the protection of the individual against undemocratic interferences and usurpations of power on the part of governmental agencies. Though these three basic classes of democracy are crucial because they provide the central mechanisms for orderly change and progress, from the Humanist standpoint they are not in themselves sufficient, even when fully actualized, for a completely democratic society. Needless to say, such actualization has never taken place in the United States or any other country that professes to be democratic.

In the *laissez-faire* tradition of the West and of America the tendency has undeniably been to isolate the meaning of democracy within the realm of politics somewhat narrowly construed. Humanists view this as a grave error comparable to the confining of morality to the sphere of sex and the family. Humanism urges the broadest possi-



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ble application of democracy to the functioning of non-governmental agencies and organizations and to extra-political fields such as those of economics, cultural activity and race relations. It recommends, too, affirmative federal and state legislation to strengthen the enforcement of democratic rights throughout the country, with recognition of the principle that modern democracy in a complex industrial society demands not only safeguards against governmental tyranny, but also positive action by government to safeguard freedom.

Fourth in the Humanist inventory of types of democracy is *economic democracy*, the right of every normal adult to a useful job at a decent remuneration, to general economic security and opportunity, to an equitable share in the material goods of this life and to a proportionate voice in the conduct of economic affairs. Economic democracy, as I define it, goes far beyond freedom from want, since it does not mean merely material security. Such security can be established on a rather restricted minimum basis. Full economic democracy, however, implies a higher and higher standard of living for the whole population as the over-all wealth of a nation increases. While not entailing equality of income, it does imply some surplus above minimum security, so that individuals and families can enjoy the cultural amenities and have an adequate chance for rest, recreation and travel. Of course discrimination in employment or wage-scale against any particular group, on grounds of race, religion, sex or politics, constitutes a violation of economic democracy.

This form of democracy also demands a distribution of

wealth sufficient to provide individuals and groups with the financial means to implement their political rights through the publication of newspapers, magazines and other materials, the renting of meeting halls, the buying of radio time, the employment of legal counsel and so on. Moreover, because of the immense weight of economic factors in any civilization, real economic democracy requires that adults who are gainfully employed should have a direct and constant influence in the determination of policies on the part of the industrial or other enterprise in which they work. This covers what has often been known as *industrial* democracy. The growth of trade unions and collective bargaining has increased the influence of which I speak, but only to a limited and unsatisfactory degree.

In his message to Congress of January 11, 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined an extensive program of economic democracy. After referring to the inalienable constitutional liberties of the American Republic, he stated: "As our nation has grown in size and stature, however — as our industrial economy expanded — these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness. We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. . . . In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all — regardless of station, race or creed." The President then enumerated eight

different economic rights that he considered essential to freedom.

Fifth, there is *organizational democracy*, the carrying out of democratic principles in and by the manifold non-governmental organizations, societies, associations, councils, and committees that operate in a nation like the United States. This covers the management and activities of churches, professional associations, fraternal bodies, clubs, trade unions, political parties, veterans' associations, and pressure groups of every complexion. Such organizations are so numerous in this country and wield such public influence that their democratic functioning, both internally and externally, is of great importance for American democracy. Since the First World War one of the groups that has most constantly menaced civil liberties in the United States has been the American Legion, which has a long and unsavory record of violating the rights of liberals, radicals and workers. On the other hand, labor unions have also been guilty of undemocratic practices, especially in that some of them set up a color bar to membership.

Sixth, there is *social democracy*, in which every person recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every other person as a member of the human family, and in which social stratification and classes based on varying economic, intellectual or other functions no longer exist. This form of democracy includes complete functional democracy, the realization that every productive job makes its particular contribution to the total community life and that therefore everyone who does useful work stands on a plane

of ethical equality with everyone else so far as the nature of his work is concerned. Humanist democracy in this sense does not ask us to forget that differences in ability and intelligence and goodness will always prevail among men; it does insist that castes and snobberies stemming from such differences be eliminated. And it is always mindful of Kant's classic statement: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end, never only as a means."<sup>133</sup>

Very important in social democracy is the maintenance of a feeling of inner warmth and friendliness toward our fellow-men, a sympathetic desire to see them prosper, a determination to be fair and honest in our dealings with them. This attitude includes the ability to argue firmly and uncompromisingly in private or public, yet to disagree with others in a tolerant manner; to experience victory or defeat in political affairs, yet not give way to anger, malice or hatred. As Walter Lippmann has so well put it: Democracy "is a fraternity which holds men together against anything that could divide them. It cools their fevers, subdues their appetites and restrains them from believing and saying and doing those irreconcilable, irreparable, inexpressible things which burst asunder the bonds of affection and trust."<sup>134</sup> In the ideal democracy men in public life would have forthright, vigorous opponents rather than bitter personal enemies.

Seventh, there is *cultural and educational democracy*, the right of all to a full and equal opportunity to share in the cultural and educational, the artistic and intellectual life of the nation. True cultural democracy demands, in

the first instance, the possession of enough leisure and money on the part of the masses of the people so that they can take advantage of the rich possibilities in the enjoyment of literature, drama, music, painting, the motion picture and the like; and so that those of really professional ability may enter the cultural field as a vocation, and work upward to the summits of creative achievement.

Educational democracy obviously requires a vast extension of institutional facilities from the primary grades to the adult level. The efficient and intelligent functioning of democracy as a whole is impossible in any land unless the population has reached at least certain minimum levels of education. Voters cannot think through and make reasoned decisions about political issues without some degree of intellectual training and without being able to assimilate a great deal of information. Illiteracy is hardly conducive to an enlightened democracy. The higher the standards of education in a country, the more honest and discerning are likely to be the candidates for public office and those who are elected.

The concept of educational democracy implies the administration of schools, colleges and other educational institutions, whether public or private, according to democratic principles, including non-discrimination in admissions policy toward such minority groups as Jews and Negroes. It also covers academic freedom, — the right of teachers and students to express their ideas on any subject whatsoever, provided only that they remain within the law. Teachers and students must likewise be free to establish and join organizations of their choosing such as

trade unions and student federations. Freedom of thought in educational institutions is a necessary condition for untrammelled scholarly research and for the advancement of science. Academic freedom, however, is not a constitutional right. And its frequent violation brings out the point that in the cultural sphere the spirit of democracy is far from being fulfilled. In the literary, artistic, and intellectual world all sorts of insidious private pressures and penalties, fears and conventions constantly cripple or kill true freedom of opinion and creation.

Eighth, there is *religious and philosophic democracy*, the right of all individuals and groups to hold, to publicize, and to practise their own particular religion or philosophy. This significant type of democracy includes the liberty to be non-religious or anti-religious. In the United States it rules out, according to Article I of the Bill of Rights, intervention by the government on behalf of any particular religion. Yet during recent years increasing attempts, some of them successful, have been made by ecclesiastical authorities to whittle away the principle of separation between state and religion, chiefly in the domain of education. Also religious pressure groups remain quite powerful in curtailing or preventing public criticism, especially in the press and over the radio, of supernaturalistic doctrines. We cannot pretend that fair and equal treatment is accorded the discussion of Humanism at the present time. In a number of states legal discriminations still exist against atheists, while on the other hand bitter prejudice persists in many states against the Catholic minority.

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Ninth, there is *democracy between the sexes* or equality between men and women in all relevant ways. This clearly covers the legal, political, economic, educational and moral spheres. Though the inequality of the sexes is particularly marked among the peoples of the East, even in the more advanced countries of the West, like Great Britain and the United States, it was only during the first part of the twentieth century that women attained the right of suffrage. This has not, however, brought full political equality; and relatively few women in these nations have been elected to public office. Furthermore, many barriers remain against the female sex in the non-political sectors of life.

In America we spend on the education of women a tiny percentage of what we spend on that of men. Only a small proportion of university professional schools admit members of the female sex. In the economic sphere, even in the United States with all its mechanical gadgets and labor-saving devices, women in general are still preoccupied with the routine tasks of cooking, washing, cleaning and taking care of the children. The important careers of motherhood and home management are not given their due under what I have called functional democracy. At the same time the male tends to remain dominant in the home, with the wife spiritually subservient and curtailed in her freedom of opinion when her views happen to run counter to her husband's. In mixed company the men almost invariably monopolize the conversation. The vice of "male chauvinism" has by no means become a thing of the past.

Tenth, there is *the democracy of age*, in which no discrimination exists in political, economic or cultural activity because of age as such, against anyone who has reached adulthood as defined by the right to vote. This form of democracy means not only opening the doors of opportunity to youth, but also keeping them open to members of the older generation. "Men over forty need not apply" is a frequent formula in American industry, but it is a cruel and unnecessary one. We need far more adequate attention to the problems of economic and psychological security in late middle age and old age. Here it is to be remembered that, owing to the improvement of health at all age levels in Western civilization, the ability of older people to participate in useful work has greatly increased. Their number has also grown. In the United States at the present time there are between thirteen and fourteen million people over sixty. The age democracy that I am suggesting does not rule out special provisions for security in old age, retirement benefits and so on.

Eleventh, there is *racial or ethnic democracy*, in which all racial or ethnic groups and minorities stand on an equal basis with other ethnic groups and are not subject to discrimination in any sphere of life. Anti-Semitism and race prejudice in general had swelled to dangerous proportions long before the twentieth century and the rise of the Fascist movement after the First World War. Hitler and the Nazis simply gave the most clear, complete, and cruel expression to already existing doctrines and practices of racial hatred and oppression.

In the United States race prejudice is concentrated



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against the Jews and Negroes, though it also operates against other minorities such as Mexicans, Indians, Orientals, and immigrants of Irish and Italian origin. The epoch-making Report of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, *To Secure These Rights*, devotes the major proportion of its space to recounting the extent and seriousness of racial inequality and injustice in America, from the brutal and violent lynchings of Negroes to the quiet ostracism of Jews through the "gentleman's agreement" and the pervasive rule of "restricted clientele" or "Christians only." Widespread discrimination against racial minorities in employment has given rise to a strong movement for the enactment of a Federal Fair Employment Practices Act. The legal and extra-legal discrimination, segregation and general humiliation which America's minorities are compelled to suffer relegates them in effect to second-class citizenship.

The close relationship between ethnic and political democracy is seen in the continued barriers to voting for approximately 10,000,000 Negroes in the South, despite the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing equal rights for white and colored citizens throughout the U.S.A. Likewise complete racial democracy is impossible without economic and cultural democracy, a fact demonstrated, again, in the seventeen southern states where the acknowledged aim has been to keep the Negro "in his place" at a low economic and cultural level. In these states not only are separate public schools maintained for Negro and white children, but also the expenditures per pupil in the Negro elementary schools are on the average

well under one-half of those for the white. Opportunities for Negroes in higher education in the South are even more severely limited.

One would hope and expect that a nation's capital would set an example for the rest of the country. But so far as its attitude toward Negroes is concerned, the city of Washington follows in general the thoroughly bad pattern of the southern states. In the North, too, the Negro is subject to many kinds of discrimination such as segregation in housing and frequent exclusion from hotels, restaurants, hospitals, bathing beaches and similar facilities. Finally, it must be said that most of the white people who sincerely support racial democracy are too self-conscious about their attitude; it does not represent a perfectly natural and free outflowing of the spirit. Probably it cannot, until the matter ceases to be a serious problem and until at least a whole generation has come to maturity in an environment of unqualified ethnic equality.

Humanism declares categorically that no country is truly democratic when racial minorities of whatever stock are denied the constitutional and other rights of citizens in general. The Second World War, in which Nazi racial oppression was one of the main issues, has made the idea of ethnic democracy more important than ever. Post-war developments have also brought this concept to the fore, with the successful movements of colored colonial peoples such as those of India and the East Indies toward self-government and independence. The notion of inherent white superiority in a world of peoples predominantly black, brown or yellow in color has no standing

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from a democratic, ethical or scientific viewpoint. It is utterly contrary to the Humanist outlook.

Twelfth and last, there is *international democracy*, in which all peoples organized as nations live on terms of equality, freedom, and friendship and do not interfere with the legitimate and peaceful aspirations of one another. This variety of democracy coalesces with the Humanist aim of enduring world peace. It functions in all forms of genuine international cooperation and more especially today in the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. International democracy and the other types of democracy closely interlock and give moral encouragement and practical stability to one another. The peace that comes with true international democracy creates a world atmosphere of calm and security favorable to the growth of the other forms of democracy. Conversely, a state of hostility or war between different countries creates an atmosphere of tension, fear, and crisis unfavorable to democratic institutions and likely to cause the weakening or abrogation of such democracy as exists.

These considerations invite comparison between existing conditions of democracy in various nations. Here the first prerequisite for a fair evaluation is adequate attention to historical perspective. Different peoples are in different stages of political and cultural development. In countries like the United States and Great Britain, with their long and strong traditions of political democracy and civil liberties, the transition to new social and economic patterns should be and can be effected through peaceful and democratic means. In the China of 1911, however, under

the Manchu dynasty, and in the Russia of 1917, under the Tsarist autocracy, the machinery for democratic change was practically non-existent; and therefore violent revolutions were necessary to get rid of the regime in power. After all, in 1776 the American people themselves resorted to revolution against the divine right of kings.

Again, it would be a lamentably un-historical approach to think that China and Soviet Russia, which have so recently thrown off monarchical tyranny, could establish in a single generation political democracies as highly developed as those of the Anglo-Saxon commonwealths. American democracy as an independent unit has been evolving for more than 170 years; and behind that lay more than 500 years of English democratic development starting with the granting of Magna Carta in 1215. It is patently unrealistic to expect that the Russians and the Chinese would be able to advance immediately to a fully matured democratic way of life. These newly liberated lands not only lacked the necessary political experience, but also did not possess the educational prerequisites such as elementary literacy. As we have seen, even the United States, with its long background of democratic experience and its relatively high standard of education, falls far short of having attained complete democracy in the political sphere or any other. The building of a thorough-going democracy requires a lot of time.

Moreover, in making international comparisons, Humanists will apply the yardstick of the different categories of democracy which I have outlined. When we do this, we find that the Soviet Union, for instance, which in-

dubitably has lagged in the sphere of political democracy and civil liberties, has forged ahead of any other power in regard to racial democracy. Manifestations of anti-Semitism and other varieties of racial prejudice and discrimination have practically disappeared among the more than 100 distinct racial and national groups of the U.S.S.R. The Russians have also made rapid strides in respect to economic democracy, cultural democracy and equality between the sexes.

It is the Soviet and Marxist thesis that economic democracy, as embodied in the functionings of a planned socialist system, provides the necessary foundation for other forms of democracy; and that democratic institutions in any country will not long remain stable and strong if the economic system is fundamentally weak and subject to recurring crisis and depression. Under such circumstances, according to the Marxists, the capitalist interests, feeling that their rule is growing precarious, will attempt to scrap democracy.

The Marxists also hold that the dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary only during the *transition* from capitalism to socialism; and that it is therefore to be regarded as a temporary emergency measure that will be eliminated as soon as the need for it passes away. No responsible Marxist or Soviet leader has ever denounced democracy as such, however harshly he has described *capitalist* democracy. I believe that the Marxists, whether inside or outside of the Communist Party, are sincere in their intention of ultimately bringing about an enduring democracy embodying the principle of "all for each and

each for all"; and extending to all the twelve aspects of democracy I have outlined. Their allegiance to this ultimate end properly places them within the ranks of democratic Humanists.

My discussion of democracy again underlines the point that the philosophy of Humanism is far more than opposition to supernatural beliefs and a corresponding concentration upon the things of this world. For Humanism not only entails the method of reason and science for the solution of men's problems, but also insists upon the method and the goal of democracy in human affairs. Humanism does not regard a general feeling of benevolence toward mankind as enough, since that does not necessarily result in democratic institutions. Undoubtedly emperors and aristocrats have occasionally been moved by genuine social benevolence. The Humanist position is, however, that the people should rule themselves according to the principles of democratic government and should determine their own patterns of freedom, happiness and progress, making their own mistakes in the process.

The mind of man knows of no adequate substitute for the democratic concept. The Humanist considers democracy in the broad sense an idea that has permanent validity for human living. Democracy in the narrow sense of formal political democracy is not only inadequate for the needs of men, but tends to discredit the democratic way, because when democracy is so restricted in function it cannot possibly solve the economic, social and racial problems of mankind.

There can be no true and complete Humanism unless it is a full-fledged *democratic* Humanism.

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### 4. *A Humanist Civilization*

A Humanist civilization is one in which the principles of the Humanist philosophy are dominant and find practical embodiment in laws, institutions, economics, culture, and indeed all the more significant aspects of individual and social life. This requires, as the final proposition of Humanism phrases it, "a far-reaching social program that stands for the establishment throughout the world of democracy and peace on the foundations of a flourishing and cooperative economic order, both national and international."

Humanism's thorough democratization of education and culture will result, I am convinced, in a cultural flowering comparable in quality of achievement to the outstanding epochs of the past and going far beyond them in breadth of impact. A Humanist society would invest in education and general cultural activity sums proportionate to what present-day governments allocate to armaments and war. Particularly would schools and colleges, universities and research institutes, with their perennial budget difficulties, benefit from vastly enlarged financial resources. At long last educational institutions would be able to construct adequate physical plants and employ at generous salaries adequate teaching staffs. Thus current over-crowding would be done away with and the advantages of individual attention for all types of students utilized to the full.

Humanist education naturally accents social rather than individualistic aims. This implies both more attention to

social studies, such as economics, politics and sociology, and inclusion in the curriculum of courses on ethics in order to train the youth of a nation in the broad Humanist attitudes of loyalty to the social group and to humanity. Humanism would also greatly extend the teaching of science and scientific method, laying stress on learning to think straight rather than on the routine memorizing of individual facts. There need be no opposition between science and the Humanities, from both of which the Humanist draws inspiration, and no concentration upon one of them to the exclusion of the other.

The Humanist educational program will be a large factor in spreading a fundamental awareness of literature and art among all of the people. This does not mean any let-down in standards; on the contrary the effects will be just the opposite, by raising to unprecedented levels the average cultural understanding and by widening to an unprecedented extent the range of true artistic accomplishment on the part of both amateurs and professionals. The ideal in view is a society in which "the artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist."<sup>135</sup>

The Humanist stress on complete cultural democracy and freedom of expression means that artists and writers should have the widest latitude in what they produce and say. A free art and a free literature are absolute essentials for a free culture. A Humanist civilization will contain many different and contradictory currents of thought, including non-Humanist and anti-Humanist tendencies. It certainly will not bring pressure on art and literature to



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conform to any official philosophy; or seek to force the novel, the theatre and the motion picture to deal with serious Humanist themes full of didactic purpose. Artists and writers in a Humanist culture will express what they believe and believe what they express. Those who so wish will criticize and satirize to their hearts' content; and will be at entire liberty to present unconventional ideas that shock, stir, alarm and awaken the Humanist orthodox.

Narrowly moralistic restraints on artists and writers have ever been a bane in the history of the West; and those restraints have frequently stemmed from the supernaturalist suspicion toward earthly pleasures. As Professor Irwin Edman explains: "The traditional quarrel between the artist and the puritan has been the quarrel between those who were frankly interested in the sensuous appearances and surfaces of things and those to whom any involvement or excitement of the senses was a corruption of the spirit or a deflection of some ordered harmony of reason. The history of censorship in the fine arts, if it could be told in full, would be found to revolve in no small measure around the assumed peril of corruption of the spirit by the incitements of the flesh through beautiful things."<sup>136</sup>

One of the prime tasks of writers and artists who have freely adopted the Humanist philosophy will be to embody in works of high artistic and literary merit, thoroughly relevant to the milieu and problems of the present, the general point of view for which Humanism stands; to express in concepts and forms consonant with the Humanist attitude that sense of the beauty and glory of life which

Michelangelo, for instance, so superbly portrayed in the Sistine Chapel through the medium of a subject-matter centered upon the supernatural. There is nothing in the nature of art and literature and poetry that makes treatment of the Christian myth lead to great creative accomplishment and that prevents a similar result in the representation of the humanistic and naturalistic world-view. Genius is not confined to the delineation of any one philosophic position concerning the universe and man.

Santayana enlarges upon our point. "The naturalistic poet," he writes, "abandons fairy land, because he has discovered Nature, history, the actual passions of men. His imagination has reached maturity. . . . Throw open to the young poet the infinity of Nature; let him feel the precariousness of life, the variety of purposes, civilizations, and religions even upon this little planet; let him trace the triumphs and follies of art and philosophy, and their perpetual resurrections — like that of the downcast Faust. If, under the stimulus of such a scene, he does not some day compose a natural comedy as much surpassing Dante's divine comedy in sublimity and richness as it will surpass it in truth, the fault will not lie with the subject, which is inviting and magnificent, but with the halting genius that cannot render that subject worthily."<sup>137</sup>

An essential function for artists and writers in a Humanist society will be to work out rituals and ceremonies that are consistent with the central tenets of Humanism. Such ceremonies should appeal to the emotions as well as the minds of the people, capturing their imagination and giving an outlet to their delight in pomp and pageantry.

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For Humanists a festival like Christmas, which has already become secularized to a large extent in the United States, would remain as a folk-day symbolizing the joy of existence, the feeling of human brotherhood and the ideal of democratic sharing. Easter can be humanistically utilized to celebrate the rebirth of the vital forces of Nature and the renewal of man's own energies. In fact, according to the anthropologists, Easter probably originated in just such a way. Humanism will likewise naturally make much of the birthdays of outstanding leaders of the human race, and of important anniversaries.

The average family in a Humanist civilization will also need wedding and funeral services based on a non-supernatural philosophy of life. It seems reasonable to suppose that even today millions of families in America and throughout the world would like to have available definitely Humanist rituals for the occasions of marriage and death. Since such families are not usually acquainted with services of dignity and beauty that are in harmony with their ideas regarding life and destiny, they tend to fall back on the traditional supernaturalist ceremonies. One result of this has been that again and again rationalists, freethinkers and Humanists are adjudged in the public eye as faithful supernaturalists because their funeral services are orthodox. A number of Humanist wedding and funeral services are already in use, such as those prepared by the Ethical Culture Societies. I have myself recently composed a simple and experimental funeral service along Humanist lines.<sup>138</sup>

In general Humanism believes in the social origin and

function of art. It repudiates the superficial slogan of art for art's sake, which represented a natural reaction against the dreariness and ugliness of nineteenth-century industrialism, and categorically asserts that art is for man's sake. At the same time Humanism eschews the artificial distinction between the fine arts and the useful arts. This is another of the old, outworn dualisms and tends in the direction of an aristocratic, spectator view of art as residing in public museums and private mansions rather than as being a pervasive complement of human work and play. So far as the products of labor are concerned, the Humanist theory is that they should embody a constant fusion of utility and grace, so that the quality of beauty will enter universally into the common objects of daily use.

The mass production of industrial goods by machinery does not necessarily prevent the fulfilment of this aim. An excellent case can be made for claiming that the best designed American automobile is of as high a standard aesthetically as the ancient Greek chariot, modern china as the ancient Greek vase and the twentieth-century skyscraper as the ancient Greek temple. The finest works of art in any case have always been socially functional in some sense. Where modern economic systems have held back and interfered with the development of good art is particularly in their emphasis on the profit motive. Artistic and literary creations can hardly be judged as to quality by the amount of money that they earn; and the general spirit prevalent in a predominantly money civilization is not conducive to the highest type of culture.

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All the great periods of cultural upsurge in human history have sprung from a definite material foundation, usually coinciding with or immediately following relative economic prosperity on the part of the particular people concerned. Greece of the Periclean Age, the European Renaissance, the flowering of New England in the nineteenth century are cases in point. Using as an analogy the monistic psychology of the unity of body and soul, I think that we can consider the soul of a nation as equivalent to its living culture and then state that this soul or culture must have an adequate physical body or base. That material base is a healthy and functioning economic system.

It is not the purpose of this book to go into the details of economics. But it is necessary to state that Humanist reliance on reason and scientific method brings to the fore the concept of *planning* as a key to the establishment of a sound economic order, though Humanists vary as to how far they favor pushing the techniques of planning. The fact is that effective thinking is in essence a form of planning and that the final solution arrived at in the case of any problem constitutes a plan of action, however elementary it may be.<sup>139</sup> The first level of planning is, then, the act of human thought itself.

The second level is an individual's general planning for himself and his future, a conscious attempt to advance beyond random impulse and to foresee and control relevant circumstances. As in all types of planning, this type revolves around the working out of adequate means to reach desired ends; and this ordinarily entails economic

considerations to a major extent. The wise individual who looks ahead will draw up an annual budget for himself. The preparation of a budget by individuals, families, businesses, governments or any organization whatever is always an example of planning.

The third level of planning is family planning, which involves estimating and adjusting income and expenditures for husband, wife and children for a year or more in advance. The planning a family does for the well-being of its members frequently looks many years into the future; it may include buying a house or an automobile through installment payments, taking out fire and life insurance, and the writing of wills. Next, we come to the economic planning of individual businesses, whether small or large, with the central coordination of different departments and the itemized control of finances.

A more complex level still is planning for an entire industry, either in the case of a privately run monopoly like the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, or in the case of the government taking over the railroads or the coal industry. The federal administration of the Post Office Department or the Department of Defense constitutes a vast planning operation. In fact, planning is at the heart of any efficient governmental administration, be it in federal, state or city affairs. Special public planning units are also in existence, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Hoover Dam, two eminently successful planning experiments with water and power resources.

A further and crucial stage is that of continuous na-

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tional planning for the benefit of all the people and through the method of coordinating the entire industrial, agricultural and financial life of a country. Such national economic planning integrates the coal industry with the steel industry, both coal and steel with transportation, and all the chief means of production and distribution with finance. National planning attempts to overcome the old evils of mass unemployment and poverty, economic crisis and depression, by means of its far-sighted measures and extensive controls. It keeps in mind not only the welfare of the present population, but also that of "our posterity" which the American Constitution mentions. For instance, nation-wide planning in the United States, with especial regard for future generations, would speedily lay down a program of conservation of our fast-dwindling natural resources such as oil, coal and other mineral deposits.

Julian Huxley's comments about possible developments in the social sciences are pertinent to the matter of planning: "Before humanity can obtain on the collective level that degree of foresight, control and flexibility which on the biological level is at the disposal of human individuals, it must multiply at least tenfold, perhaps fiftyfold, the proportion of individuals and organizations devoted to obtaining information, to planning, correlation and the flexible control of execution. The chief increases are needed in respect of correlation and planning and of social self-consciousness. In these respects, wholly new social organs must be evolved, whose nature we can only envisage in the most general terms. In respect of planning and correlation, we can dimly perceive that some large

single central organization must be superposed on the more primitive system of separate government departments and other single-function organizations; and that this, like the cerebral cortex, must be at one and the same time unified and functionally specialized."<sup>140</sup>

From the Humanist viewpoint social-economic planning provides exactly the type of correlation and social self-consciousness that Huxley suggests. It advances to the very center of things the social sciences, which have hitherto lagged behind the natural sciences, and puts them in the commanding and concretely functioning position that they warrant. Large-scale planning, utilizing our highly developed statistical techniques and correlating the million and one detailed reports constantly coming in from the field, makes the intricate pattern of economic forces more and more measurable and brings about what has been aptly called *total visibility*. In each country the National Planning Commission, integrating the vast network of planning sub-commissions and of administrative agencies, becomes a sort of all-seeing eye and brain, adding up to a great community mind operating purposefully and unceasingly on behalf of the common good. Thus reason, in the form of socially functioning intelligence, is elevated to its proper place in the affairs of men and the Humanist ideal is fulfilled.

We can envisage a great Master Plan taking place in America and marshalling all the immense technical skills and individual abilities from one end of the country to the other to raise the general standard of living to fresh heights. Such a National Plan, drawn up with both



realism and imagination, could arouse the enthusiasm of the average citizen, enable him to see how his own particular job contributes to the larger objective, and give him a new sense of the significance and dignity of his work. For the people as a whole a series of National Plans, harnessing the popular will and energies to ambitious peace-time goals of an economic and cultural nature, might well provide "the moral equivalent of war" which William James saw as one of the most salient needs of modern man. Central planning can be of cardinal importance in concretizing and implementing the Humanist ethical aim of striving for the maximum social good.

Contrary to a widespread impression, social-economic planning is fully compatible with democracy and actually can be utilized as a major instrument in furthering the goals of democracy.<sup>141</sup> Humanism conceives of planning in both its drafting and execution as carried out all along the line according to democratic methods, with ultimate control in the electorate and with as much decentralization as possible. Democratic planning must also be flexible and able to adjust itself to unforeseen circumstances and changes in the total situation.

The close tie-up that has existed between planning and political dictatorship in Soviet Russia is not a necessary or intrinsic characteristic of planning. Other countries, and notably Great Britain, have recently been putting through national planning on a democratic basis and as part of a socialist program. In my opinion effective social-economic planning throughout a whole nation does require public ownership and operation of the main means

of production and distribution. I have given my reasons for this conclusion in a previous book advocating democratic socialism.<sup>142</sup> Many, if not most, philosophic Humanists do not go as far as this in their economic theory; and I am not trying to suggest that belief in a socialist economic system is an essential proposition in the Humanist philosophy as such.

The generality of Humanists would agree, however, that in a Humanist civilization property rights must not be elevated above basic human rights; and that if property rights conflict with human rights, the former must be treated as subordinate. Here we return once more for inspiration to what the Founding Fathers said in the Declaration of Independence. Instead of listing life, liberty and *property* as the unalienable rights of men,<sup>4</sup> as had John Locke, the English philosopher who so strongly influenced Jefferson and other early American statesmen, the signers of the Declaration substituted "the pursuit of happiness" for "property." This was a most significant departure.

Finally, among the possibilities of planning, is the highest and broadest level of all — that of world planning. International planning for the welfare of all mankind becomes possible only with a tremendous extension of international organization. A successfully functioning United Nations, with its many specialized agencies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Health Organization and UNESCO, obviously implies some degree of planetary planning and could lay the foundation for an integrated

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world economy and political federation. When inclusive social-economic planning, through democratic methods, does at last take in all the continents and countries of the globe we shall then have in operation an over-all, man-created World Mind, so to speak. This International Mind would represent the culmination of the Life of Reason and would constitute the nearest approach to divine omniscience in earthly affairs that Humanism can imagine.

Obviously any practicable and constructive scheme of world planning depends on the elimination of international war, the most terrible and destructive malady that has ever afflicted the human race. Modern philosophers have been perennially concerned with the scourge of war. Kant's succinct essay, "Perpetual Peace," written in 1795, was among the best philosophic studies of the subject. Kant included among his prerequisites for international peace that every nation should have a republican constitution, that each people should possess national self-determination, that there should be general disarmament and that there should be a federation of free states agreeing to abolish war forever. He also suggested an eventual "State of nations," or world-republic, embracing all peoples. The Humanist, while disagreeing with the supernaturalistic aspects of Kant's philosophy, can certainly agree with his program for peace so far as it goes.

In the twentieth century the idea of a federation of free states became embodied in the League of Nations, which collapsed with the outbreak of World War II, and in the United Nations, which was created at the conclusion of World War II. Both these organizations were

founded upon the principle of collective security, namely that the peace-loving countries of the earth should band together against any aggressor or potential aggressor and speedily put an end, by means of collective action and mutual assistance, to war or the threat of war. For Humanism the principle of collective security is a vital one in international affairs.

The realistic Humanist, however, believing in at least a limited economic interpretation of history, will look beyond fine-sounding peace pronouncements and formal peace organizations to those fundamental economic forces and relationships that make for war. We can find an economic interpretation of war as far back as Plato when he said, "Wars are occasioned by the love of money."<sup>143</sup> Without contending that economics constitutes the whole story behind war, we can state that unless and until the different peoples of the world solve their basic economic dilemmas centering around poverty, unemployment, inflation, depression, business monopoly and the use of natural resources, there will be no lasting international peace.

Clearly, too, the various nations, now exceeding ninety in number, will not be able to work out their economic problems independently of one another. All countries in this modern age are economically, politically and culturally inter-related and inter-dependent. The time is past when any national unit can be sufficient unto itself and function prosperously and securely in isolation from the rest of mankind. A long time ago Plato stressed in his *Dialogues* the theme of the good individual in the good

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society, showing how difficult it is for a person to achieve virtue in a bad environment. Today it is relevant to talk about the good *nation* in the good *world*. No one country, however wealthy, populous and powerful, can fulfil its finest potentialities until it can live in a decent international environment very dissimilar from that of the present. A truly Humanist civilization must be a world civilization.

For the Humanist it follows that beyond all questions of national self-interest, every people has a moral obligation to humanity as a whole; a duty, which is also an opportunity, to make common cause with the other peoples of the earth in man's eternal quest for peace, plenty and freedom. All individuals of all countries are together fellow-citizens of our one world and fellow-members of our one human family. The Americans, the Russians, the English, the Indians, the Chinese, the Germans and the rest are all part of the same perplexed, proud, aspiring human race.

Plainly, the Humanist program is and must be international in scope and aim. Humanism, however, is not only a philosophy with a world ideal, but is an ideal philosophy for the world. It is quite conceivable that a majority of this planet's population could come to see the truth of its underlying principles. The Humanist viewpoint, surmounting all national and sectional provincialisms, provides a concrete opportunity for overcoming the age-long cleavage between East and West. Even those who cling to some form of supernaturalism can unite with Humanists, as they did during the Second World War, on a pro-

gram of democracy and progress that reaches to the farthest corners of the earth. Humanism is a supra-national, pan-human philosophy of universal relevance; it is the philosophic counterpart of world patriotism.

In my endeavor to present a compact, minimum prospectus of the Humanist philosophy, I have naturally had to deal very briefly with certain large topics, especially in this last chapter. Yet I have tried to make explicit Humanism's clear and uncompromising answer on the major philosophic issues. In an era in which multitudes of people have lost the faith of their forebears and waver uncertainly in a no man's land of doubt concerning the ultimate problems of existence, Humanism takes an unequivocal position and offers an integrated and affirmative way of life. The Humanist synthesis, while of course gathering strength from other philosophies, has a unity and a dynamic of its own.

As for the future, with international antagonisms at present rising to a dangerous peak, particularly the hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union, the immediate prospects for the great world society of Humanism do not seem any too favorable. Yet Humanism, however dark the outlook at any specific time, tends to take the long view and to remain hopeful of the decades to come. This philosophy, with its faith in man and in his ability to solve his problems through humanly developed methods and techniques, takes its stand on what might be called a reasoned optimism. It rejects the dead ends of despair as well as the daydreams of Utopia.

Despite the appalling world wars and other ordeals

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through which humanity has been compelled to pass during the first half of the twentieth century, I believe firmly that man, who has shown himself to be a very tough animal, has the best part of his career still before him. And there is at least the possibility that within the next few decades and before the close of this century the human race will emerge onto the lofty plateau of a world-wide Humanist civilization.

In the meaningful perspectives of the Humanist philosophy man, although no longer the darling of the universe or even of this earth, stands out as a far more heroic figure than in any of the supernaturalist creeds, old or new. He has become truly a Prometheus Unbound with almost infinite powers and potentialities. For his great achievements man, utilizing the resources and the laws of Nature yet without Divine aid, can take full credit. Similarly, for his shortcomings he must take full responsibility. Humanism assigns to man nothing less than the task of being his own saviour and redeemer.

“And man the stumbler and finder,  
                    goes on,  
man the dreamer of deep dreams,  
man the shaper and maker,  
  
man the answerer. . . .  
Man is a long time coming.  
Man will yet win. . . .”<sup>144</sup>





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